



Andessa by GirlyGirlAlert

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Summary: Andessa Fisher was content with her life, to say the least. It all changed one fateful November night when Will Byers, one of her closest friends, went missing. Dodging her grounding, Andy joins her friends in a desperate attempt to find Will, even if it involves a mysterious government conspiracy. Follows the events of the TV show with OCs. Rated T for language. Reviews welcome!

1. 0

She was eight when she moved to Hawkins, Indiana. To her new home, her new life.

As her brown eyes trailed over the fancy houses, Andy huffed in faint irritation.

If she was being honest, Andy didn't mind the thought of moving. Her parents had designed and built her old home long before she, Christopher, Tyler or even Tara had been thought about. All four of the Fisher children had been born and raised in the Fisher farm and country club, safe and sound in Chicago, before their parents abruptly packed them up and dragged them to Hawkins.

Tara had whined, she was in her last year of high school and had hoped to graduate alongside her friends, rather than with a bunch of strangers she had no interest in. Tyler was indifferent, as long as their parents made sure long distance communication was possible, he wouldn't complain. Christopher, Tyler's twin, was a different story. Christopher, upon hearing the news, had sobbed his heart out, clinging to the kitchen counter as their mum dragged him out of the house. Andy wasn't quite sure why the move had affected her older brother so much, Christopher really was quiet about his feelings most of the time.

Andy, herself, wasn't upset about moving. She was always up for a new adventure, and moving was the next best thing! What she was sad about, however, was her parents 'bright' idea of keeping Andy at home to homeschool her through her first years at elementary school. She was rather confused on that account. She'd been in school her whole life, well, since she was three at least, and she was rather stuck on the sudden transition to homeschooling. Her parents, being her parents, refused to answer her questions.

All too soon, the large van that housed the Fisher family pulled up at their new home. Andy sighed as she stared out the window at the rather large house. She felt the large body of Tara leaning over her. "What the actual f-"

"Watch your mouth, young lady!" Andy's mum snapped, whirling around in the seat to glare at her oldest. She quickly glanced down at Andy. "There is a child present."

Tara rolled her eyes.

"Well kids," their dad turned around in his seat to grin at them, "what'd ya think?"

Tara's eyes narrowed. "Dad, it's awful!" She snapped. "How the hell am I supposed to bring *anyone* HERE?!"

Their dad quickly deflated in his seat, "w-well, princess, you always said you wanted a castle, so your mother and I, we designed this Victorian house for you." Their mum smiled from her seat.

"We thought you'd like it, honey."

"No!" Tara spat. "I hate it! I stopped wanting to live in a castle when I was freakin' six years old!"

"What about you Tyler?" Their mum sighed, leaning to face her oldest son, who was nestled in the backseat with his brother.

Andy pushed herself up onto her hands and moved her head, trying to see into the back. "Victorian, interesting." Tyler's bland voice carried through the car, echoing the power and authority of the debate teams leader. "It is a bit embarrassing, though."

Their mum's eyes squeezed shut as her husband slumped forward. "Chris, dear, what about you?" He asked gently, remembering his sons... fragile state. Chris said nothing, and a snuffle came from his seat.

"Andessa, pumpkin, do you like it?" Andy snapped to attention at the sound of her mother's voice. It was hopeful and pleading, begging that, maybe, at least one of their children would like the house.

"It looks fun." She simply stated, not daring to say she that she thought that, perhaps, the Victorian-styled house could get embarrassing as she got older. Her dad shot up.

"That's great, 'Dessa!" He faced the children. "Out you get! The place is already furnished, if you have any dislike towards your rooms, come and tell us." He demanded.

Andy opened the door and was immediately shoved out by Tara. The seventeen-year-old peered down at her and huffed, storming towards the house. Tyler stepped out in a refined manner, straightening his jacket as he did so. He reached down and grabbed ahold of Andy's arm, pulling her up, before turning around to face the car just as Christopher came tumbling out into his brother's arms. Andy's mum wrapped her arms around her youngest daughter and began to lead her towards the house.

This was it, the start of her new life...

She was eleven when she went back to school. After three years of homeschooling, Andy had almost forgotten what regular school was like.

Tara was back in Florida, she'd been accepted into some fancy college and lived on campus with her boyfriend, Joseph. She didn't call much anymore. *'I can't, I have school work.'* is what she told Andy when the then-ten-year-old called. *'Plus, Joseph's family is coming over.'* Tara's life revolved around her boyfriend, and when he told her he didn't like her family, Tara shut them out. Christopher was one of the most popular boys in Hawkins High. He had quickly reverted back to his 'cool and calm' exterior (Andy's mum blamed it on his friend Steve Harrington) and charmed his way into Hawkins hearts.

Tyler, on the other hand, was... different. He managed and lead the debate team to a great many victories, making him quite popular, but he'd abandoned any and all male friends for the comfort of the female debate team. It was puzzling to everyone, especially when he never tried anything with any of them. Soon the jokes were flying and Tyler was seen as queer. *'I'm not queer.'* Andy had overheard him telling Christopher, *'It's just I prefer their company; the guys here are douchebags.'* Christopher agreed and Andy never brought it up. Andy didn't think she'd changed. She hadn't been out much. She was too busy with homeschooling and she'd often go with her dad to his job. She wouldn't do much, she mostly went because her parents didn't

want her home alone.

Andy exhaled heavily as she stared over at the school doors. She was standing near the stairs, Christopher beside her, waiting for the bell to ring and the doors to open, she was early after all. She sat there for maybe five minutes when a voice reached her ears. "Hey fag!" the voice shouted. Andy turned and looked over at the small debacle. A crowd of students surrounded a small boy, who sat with his head down, gazing at his books. The one yelling was tall, with a rather large boy beside him.

"Where's your faggy friends? Gone off to prepare fairyland for you all?!" Christopher stood up, his face turning red in anger. Andy followed his cue and stood, placing a gentle hand on her brother's arm.

Since Tyler's bullying, Christopher had been very sensitive to any homophobia. It seemed that the older twin had revealed something to his brother that Andy had missed. "Come on, Andy. I want you to put a stop to this." Christopher murmured. Andy nodded, she knew that if she let Christopher do it, he'd accidentally kill the poor boy.

"Hey!" Andy shouted, storming into the crowd. The tall boy turned and looked at her.

"What?!"

Andy raised an eyebrow. "Why're you yelling at this boy?"

The large one snorted and the tall one laughed. "Why do you think?! He's a fag, a queer!"

"What makes you think that?" She tilted her head, an innocent look on her face.

"H-he," the tall one stammered, obviously not used to explaining himself. Andy barely refrained from rolling her eyes. She lived with the leader of Indiana's best debate team, she had to explain and argue *everything*. The tall one coughed. "He's just a fairy, you can see it in everything he does. The fag is a member of the art club!" He shouted as if that'd validate everything.

Andy furrowed her eyebrows, purposely appearing confused. "I don't think I understand."

By this point, three kids had snuck into the crowd and lead the bullied boy out of the circle without anyone noticing. Andy concealed a smirk. She'd been the perfect distraction.

The tall one was saved from answering when the bell rang and everyone rushed off to class. Andy sent the two boys an unimpressed look before shoving her way out of the crowd. Christopher was smirking at her, a proud gleam in his eyes. "Good job sis." He told her, ruffling her hair. "Have a fun day."

And she did. In fact, Andy had the best day she'd ever had. School at Hawkins was nice, the teachers were almost as good as her tutors and her classmates seemed quietly impressed by her distraction of the two bullies, Troy and James, as she'd learnt they were called. She didn't learn the names of the four boys until a few weeks later, when a stuttering Will Byers, the 'gay one', had asked Andy if she wanted to sit with him and his friends, Micheal 'Mike' Wheeler - a boy Andy recognized from a dinner party she'd attended when she was younger - , Lucas Sinclair and Dustin Henderson.

That was the start of her friendship with the most amazing and weirdest boys she would ever meet.

2. 1

WARNING: THIS STORY CONTAINS CANON-TYPICAL AND NON-CANON-TYPICAL SWEARING. THE 'F' WORD IS USED A RECORDED THRICE THIS CHAPTER

Sunday, November 6th, 1983.

The Fisher Home.

Andy smirked, watching in amusement as Christopher and Tyler playfully wrestled in the living room. "Chris, Tyler, stop fighting." Their mum called as she walked into the room. The living room was a rather homely area situated on the bottom floor of their three-story house. The walls were coated with a cerulean blue paint with a patterned sky rug spread under sapphire couches and a white coffee table. It was their mum's favourite room and the most used in the entire house.

"Andessa May Fisher! What are you wearing?!" Their mum stared down at her youngest, disbelief in her brown eyes. While she didn't really care for status or what people thought of the Fisher family, Denise was very much so a fashion nut who wanted her children to look their very best. Andy furrowed her eyebrows, what was wrong with her clothes? Christopher seemed to have read her mind because he too stared at their mum incredulously.

"Mum, what's wrong with what she's wearing? It's all the trend." He asked, his lips pursed.

Their mum sighed and began her spiel, "there are holes in your jeans, your shoes are tattered, your belt is far too wide, your ribbon is uneven, your bag is ripping and your earrings are highly unfashionable!"

Andy slumped in her seat as she explained, "mum, this is cool, its hip! I just want to fit in, plus Christopher was the one who chose it," upon seeing her older brothers glare, she quickly added, "with Tyler's help of course." Their mum gazed down at her three children, scanning

them as though silently interrogating them for lies about the current fashion trends.

Seeming to find nothing, she placed a plate of toast, sunny side up eggs and bacon in front of her children. "Very well. Andy, hurry up and finish your breakfast, I'm sure the boys are dying to get that campaign of theirs going." She rolled her eyes fondly.

It was no secret that Denise loved the four boys her daughter had designated as her best friends. She saw them as a good influence and adored the ways in which they would include Andy in their little Dungeons and Dragons campaigns, even if she, both Andy and Denise that is, had barely any idea of what was going on. After the way Tara turned out, Denise had been very careful about who her precious daughter would be allowed to hang out with and when Andy had begun telling stories of Will Byers, Mike Wheeler - who, as it turns out, was the son of one of her friends, Karen -, Dustin Henderson and Lucas Sinclair, she had been delighted.

Andy snorted, "knowing them, they would've already started." Despite this, she wolfed down her food faster than humanly possible and shot up, rushing outside.

"Hey, weirdo, want a lift?" Christopher called after her.

"No thanks, I'll bike it."

Andy's bike had been a surprise birthday present from her dad after a great many months of Andy complaining that *'all my friends have bikes, dad! I don't want to be the only one!'*. Logan Fisher was always an emotionally influenced man, facts and figures wouldn't convince him like it would his wife and oldest son, but the minute Andy had begun sniffing, whimpering that she just wanted to fit in, he'd broken down into tears and bought her the best bike he could afford, vintage, of course.

Andy's bike was a rather expensive bike, more so than her friends, anyway. It was painted a charming mint green that seemed almost blue at times, with a small wicker basket tied and clipped to the front, and a metal ledge along the back designed for another basket. Secretly, Andy used the metal ledge to cart around one of her only

female friends, Jamie Kalum. It was a well cared for bike, as the whole family was able to use it - it had an adjustable seat and handle - and it even had its own little parking space in the garage.

"Okay, have fun!" Tyler shouted as the door closed.

The Wheeler Abode.

For once in her life, Andy was wrong. The boys hadn't started the campaign without her because, this time, they intended to involve her. It was the sixth campaign Andy had ever been to, and over time, she and the boys had carefully crafted her character, a rogue elf **[AN: I have no idea about anything I'm about to write, I've never played Dungeons & Dragons, nor has anyone I know. I did do a bit of research on the Dungeons & Dragons website, but I can't promise I did everything correctly]**.

It'd taken her a bit, but the boys were patient, well, sort of, and explained everything clearly, well, sort of. Soon, they were approaching the end of the game, and Andy was hooked and sucked into the story. "Something is coming," Mike said in a low voice, looking over everyone darkly "something hungry for blood. A shadow grows on the wall behind you, swallowing you in darkness. *It is almost here.*"

Will leaned forward in anticipation. "What is it?"

"What if its the Demogorgon?" Dustin proposed worriedly. Andy brought her hand to her mouth and chewed on her nail in worry. "Oh, Jesus, we're screwed if its the Demogorgon."

"It's not," Lucas commented confidently, "the Demogorgon."

Andy glanced over at Will in worry. Mike quickly brought everyone back to the story as he shouted, "an army of Troglydtes charge into the chamber!"

The boys relaxed, and Andy glanced around. Seeing this was good, her brought her nail out of her mouth and wiped it on her jeans. She hated saliva on her fingers, but it was a common occurrence when

one's habit is to chew on their nails.

"Troglydites?" Dustin smirked over at Andy as Lucas waved his hands around smugly.

"Told ya." He stated with a chuckle, which led to everyone else giggling. Andy wasn't fooled, Mike wouldn't let them off so easily. She watched as his grin slowly fell off of his face and he began to look around.

"Wait a minute." Everyone snapped back to attention and Andy raised her eyebrow. "Did you hear that? Th-that sound..." Andy smirked. Mike was good at storytelling. Shame he couldn't act to save his life though, she was sure he'd make a great actor. "Boom... boom... BOOM!" He slammed his hands on the table as he shouted the last boom.

Andy jumped back in shock. She certainly wasn't expecting that.

"That didn't come from the Troglydites." Mike uttered hurriedly. "No, that... that came from something else." He peered at them from over his book. Everyone stared back, worry alight in their eyes. "The Demogorgon!"

Everyone groaned simultaneously. Andy rested her head in her hands, both amused and intrigued. It was certainly getting interesting. "We're in deep shit." Dustin cursed, looking helplessly at the board.

"Will, your action!" Mike called to Will, who gazed nervously around the table. Andy tilted her head, wondering what Will would do.

It seemed even he didn't know what to do, "I don't know!"

"Fireball him," Lucas shouted.

Will shook his head and argued, "I'd have to roll 13 or higher."

Andy immediately knew that Will was doomed if he attempted to fireball the Demogorgon. "Too risky." Dustin agreed, "Cast protection."

"Will, you're set for death if you try this," Andy warned. "Protect yourself."

"Don't be a pussy," Lucas physically shoved Andy out of the way so he could get closer to Will. "Fireball him!"

"Cast protection," Dustin argued. Andy sighed and leaned back in her seat. It'd be better if she avoided getting hit by Lucas's expressive hands.

Mike slams the table a second time. "The Demogorgon is tired of your silly human bickering. It stomps towards you. Boom!"

Lucas immediately turned to face Will, "fireball him!" He pressured.

"Another stomp, boom!" Mike wailed.

"Cast protection." Dustin's voice was quieter than Lucas's but commanded attention and for Will to listen to him.

"He roars in anger!"

Andy's head returned to her hands as she watched Lucas, Will and Dustin clamour and argue about the best move. "Fireball!" Will proclaimed, leaning forward and throwing the dice. He overshot it though and the dice went rolling off the table. Andy grimaced. It would not be easy to find in the organised chaos that was the Wheeler basement.

Andy shot off her seat, rushing in the general direction of where the dice went. "Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit." She cursed as she dove under piles and piles of blankets and pillows in search of the dice. Faintly, Andy heard Mrs Wheeler yelling at Mike from the top of the stairs, and Mike running after her. Andy pulled away from the blankets with a sigh. Seemed it was time to go.

"Oh, I got it!" Will cried, standing up. Andy rushed over to him. "Does the seven count?" Will asked Lucas.

"It was a seven?" Lucas inquired. Will nodded. "Did Mike see it?" Andy rolled her eyes and walked over to Dustin. She loved Lucas, she really did, but he was always the one willing to lie to come out on

top. "Then it doesn't count," Lucas told Will behind her.

"Hey Dustin." Andy murmured as she stood beside the boy, picking up one of the leftover pizza boxes.

"Hi 'Dessa." Dustin grinned at seeing Andy roll her eyes fondly at the nickname. Andy was never too fussed about her name. Andessa was an alright name, she quite liked it, but it could be a mouthful at times, so people would generally shorten it to Andy. Dustin, of course, had decided to give her a different nickname. It'd taken her a while to get used to being called 'Dessa, but she supposed it wasn't the worst nickname on the planet.

Dustin reached over to grab the other pizza, he opened it and saw there was some left behind. "Yo, hey, guys!" Dustin called over to Will and Lucas, who were running up the stairs. "Does anyone want this?" He held up the box a bit.

"No." Will and Lucas said simultaneously. Andy smiled when Dustin turned to her.

"No thanks, I'm good." She climbed up the staircase, the pizza box still in her hand. "Hey, losers, wait up!" She called, jogging a bit to keep up. Will stopped and turned to smile at her.

"Hey Nancy," Andy spoke hurriedly as she passed Nancy's, Mike's older sisters, bedroom. Nancy glanced over at her quickly but didn't say anything. Andy just barely stopped herself from rolling her eyes. "Are you sure Nancy used to be nice?" Andy asked Will as she came to a stop beside him.

Will nodded with another smile, "yeah, she used to play D&D with us all the time." Andy shot him a look of disbelief.

"I don't think I believe that."

"He's not lying." Lucas piped up as they walked out of the house.

Mike soon came out of the house, rolling his eyes. "I can't believe we have to stop the campaign already!" He cried.

Andy sent him a smirk. "Hey, it was good, Mike. I doubt Dustin could

top it." Dustin had been saying recently that he was planning the 'campaign to end all campaigns'. Needless to say, after seeing Mike's abilities as a Dungeon Master, Andy called bullshit. Will grinned as Mike and Lucas snickered.

"There's something wrong with your sister," Dustin said as he walked out of the house, frowning.

Andy raised an eyebrow, wasn't she, Will and Lucas just talking about this? "What are you talking about?" Mike said in confusion.

"She's got a stick up her butt."

Andy snorted. "That much is obvious." She muttered under her breath. Will chuckled.

"Yeah." Lucas laughed, agreeing with Dustin. "It's because she's been dating that douchebag, Steve Harrington." Andy bit her lip to stop herself from speaking. While she didn't necessarily like Steve, he was her brother's best friend and he'd proven himself to be a bit different to his King Steve persona, especially when her parents had been out of town and Christopher, Tyler and Steve had had to look after her for an entire week.

"Yeah." Dustin agreed. "She's turning into a real jerk."

"She's always been a real jerk." Mike raised his voice.

Dustin shook his head. "Nuh-uh. She used to be cool."

Andy sent him an incredulous look. "What are you talking about, Dustin? I've only known her for two years, but she's always been uptight."

"That's where you're wrong, 'Dessa, my lady. She dressed up as an elf for our Elder Tree campaign that one time." Dustin contradicted.

"I don't think that's possible." Andy shook her head and began biking.

"She did," Mike called, "four years ago!" He shouted at their backs.

Dustin sent Andy a smug look that read, '*see I was right.*' Andy rolled

her eyes and looked around. "Where's Will?" She asked.

"Right here!" Will called from behind her. Andy sent him a smile. Will, being the youngest of the group, was definitely babied by the other three, but Andy had a larger habit of doing so. She figured it was mostly due to being babied constantly by her older siblings, and she was using that as a reference as to how to treat the youngest party member. Will had, at first, found it embarrassing, but quickly found that it was just Andy's way of protecting him. Her first meeting with him had been when he was being bullied and in a vulnerable position, after all.

"Good night, ladies," Lucas called as they approached his house.

Dustin was quick to retort, "kiss your mum 'night for me."

Andy snickered and rolled her eyes. She was almost at her turn. Andy lived in one of the more upper-class neighbourhoods, with her mum being a lawyer and her dad being a doctor of some sort. "Bye losers!" Andy shouted as she turned her corner. She had timed her goodbye a bit too late, though, because she didn't hear Dustin's witty reply.

Andy rode for another ten minutes, weaving between houses and down alleys, before she finally came to a stop at her house, just at the top of the hill. As she looked up at her house, Andy sighed. She had known it would get embarrassing as she got older, but she'd never truly realised just how awful it'd be. There was a very obvious reason as to why Andy had never invited any of her friends over to her house, and the house itself was the reason why.

"Mum, I'm home!" Andy shouted as she walked in the garage door, which was in the kitchen, not worried about waking anyone up. The kitchen was large, larger than even the living room, with shining tabletops and deep brown cabinets. It was the cleanest room in the house, as hardly anyone was in it majority of the time. The only people who ever really went into the kitchen was the weekly maid, Patricia, the cook, James, and her mum when she felt like cooking.

Looking around sneakily, Andy rushed over to the fridge and yanked out an apple. She froze as she heard a cough come from behind her. "Andessa May, where have you been?" Denise shouted, looking at her

youngest with a stern eye. Christopher, who'd followed her into the kitchen, chuckled. Andy glared over at him. While the Fisher siblings were close, they were still siblings.

"Ten hours you've been gone. Ten!" Andy was sat on the couch in the living room, looking down as Denise paced in front of her. Her dad, Logan, was stood beside his wife, looking at his daughter in disappointment.

"Andessa, darling," Logan said gently, "we're very relaxed with you and we allow you to go out and do what you wish in your free time, but it's a school night, and you weren't very responsible."

Denise scoffed. "'Not very responsible' he says. You, young lady, are grounded." Andy winced. "What makes it worse is that your father and I have a business trip tomorrow and won't be home for another week." Denise held her head in her hands. Andy's head shot up and she stared at her parents incredulously. *What business trip?* Andy wondered. It was the first she'd heard of *that* development. "What we'll do is, you'll be grounded while your father and I are away. That means no TV, no D&D, no hanging out with your friends outside of school and no phone. We'll call you every night at a random time, and you better be home," she warned, glaring at her daughter furiously.

Andy nodded and didn't argue. After all, how could you argue with an angry lawyer, a disappointed father, an amused present of the debate team and an older brother that was enjoying this far too much? "Now," Logan started, "get to bed."

Monday, November 7th, 1983.

Hawkins Middle School.

The next morning, Christopher pulled up at the school, Tyler in the passenger seat and Andy in the back. Usually, Andy would ride to school with Mike, Will, Dustin and Lucas, but part of her grounding was no bike.

The moment she'd woken up that morning, Denise had locked her bike away in the shed with a bike chain, given the shed key to Tyler - he'd be the hardest to convince, after all - and hidden the bike chain key away. Andy had watched from her place in the dining room, eating Lucky Charms, as her dad followed Denise around, saying, *"I think we're being too harsh on her, love. She's only twelve, she'll learn from her mistakes. We'll be gone for over two weeks!"* Much to the shock of literally no one, Denise didn't give in.

"Okay, weirdo, don't forget to tell your friends you're grounded." Christopher turned around to remind her.

Tyler glanced at her in the mirror. "I've got a debate on tonight in Nashville, so I won't be home. Don't worry though, Christopher will be there to make sure you keep to your punishment. Right, Christopher?" Tyler turned to glare at his younger brother.

Christopher snorted and rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah. Now," he glared at Andy, "get out, weirdo. We do have to get to high school, ya know?"

Andy raised an unimpressed eyebrow at him, "and the high school is, what? A five-minute walk?" She climbed out of the car, before her brothers could clap back and make the punishment even worse, and sprinted to the bike racks, where Mike, Lucas and Dustin were waiting.

"Where's Will?" She inquired as a way of greeting.

Mike shook his head. "I don't know."

"I'm telling you," Lucas interjected as they began their walk to the entrance, "his mum's right. He probably just went to class early again."

"Wait," Andy stopped the group, holding her arm out, "Joyce hasn't seen him?"

"Nope," Dustin stated simply. "Which you would know if you'd bothered to show up this morning," He muttered under his breath. Andy sent him a glare. Since Andy had gotten her bike, she'd caught

onto the Parties habit of riding together in the mornings. Will would ride to Dustin's, where Andy would somehow already be at the bus stop across the road, then peddle to Lucas's and finally to Mike's, where they'd pause for orange juice and a waffle. With her grounding, she wasn't able to do that.

"I'm sorry," Andy said, her voice sarcastic and taking on a shallow edge, "due to the campaign running overtime last night, I am now grounded, which means no bike, no phone, no arcades and no D&D." The three turned to stare at her, shock evident in their eyes.

"All that because you were late?" Mike asked incredulously, the tiniest hint of guilt in his words.

"Ten hours, Mike," was her reply.

Their small argument was cut off by a familiar, annoying voice. "Step right up, ladies and gentlemen." Troy's smug and conceited voice called. The Party turned around, annoyance coating their expressions. "Step right up and get your tickets for the freak show." Troy and his goon, James, came to a stop. "Who do you think would make more money in a freak show?"

He came up and punched Lucas in the chest. "Midnight," Mike helplessly lifted his arm to attempt to defend himself, "Frogface," Andy gritted her teeth as Troy, instead of punching her, took her glasses, "Homeschool," he punched Dustin, "or Toothless?"

"I haven't been homeschooled in two years, Troy," Andy glared, snatching her glasses from his hands. That was a lie. She hadn't been homeschooled in a year and three months.

They ignored her, and James raised his hand to his chin, as though he was thinking. *As if he can actually think*, Andy thought to herself with a snort. "I'd go with Toothleth," James said, faking a lisp.

"I told you a million times, my teeth are coming in," Dustin stated, sounding exasperated and tired. Andy knew what he said wasn't a lie, he had said it over a million times, they'd started counting. "It's called Cleidocranial Dysplasia."

"I thold you a millth times." James mocked. Andy rolled her eyes and raised an eyebrow. After hanging out with the Party for over a year, Dustin's very slight lisp had become normal, almost unheard, and James's exaggerated lisp merely made him sound stupid. James looked at Troy and the two snickered.

"Do the arm thing," Troy demanded. Dustin just stared at him. Andy honestly didn't know why Troy and James teased Dustin for his 'arm thing', while it certainly wasn't normal, it was amazingly cool.

"Do it, freak!" James glared.

Dustin began shrugging off his bag when Jamie came close to them. The blonde girl sent Andy a wave and mouthed '*Study after school?*' Andy shook her head and tilted her head in the direction of the bathroom. Jamie nodded and left with a small smile sent in Andy's direction. Dustin cracked in elbows and Troy and James let out exaggerated groans.

"God, it gets me every time," Troy complained, shoving past them.

Andy raised an eyebrow. "Then why does he make you do it?" She uttered to Dustin. Dustin shook his head with a small grin.

"No idea."

"Assholes," Lucas stated.

Mike looked over at Dustin, telling him, "I think it's kinda cool. It's like you have superpowers or something. Like Mr Fantastic."

Andy snorted with that explanation. "I think it's a little different, Mike."

"Yeah," Dustin agreed, "I can't fight evil with it."

"That's where you're wrong, Dusty-boy!" Andy began walking to the bathroom, shouting at Dustin over her shoulder, "Troy and James are most certainly evil, and it seems to scare them off well enough." She faintly heard the sound of the Party laughing behind her before she closed the door and turned to face Jamie.

Jamie Kalum was thirteen years old and had been held back a year after failing grade eight. Her tutor had been Andy's while she'd been homeschooled, and had directed the young girl to Andy for study sessions. Since then Jamie and Andy had formed a sort of bond, a friendship despite Jamie's popular girl status. Every weekday, after school for an hour, Jamie and Andy would meet up and study together.

"Hey James." Andy greeted with a smile.

Jamie nodded back, a large grin on her face, "Andy. So, what's the plan for after school?" She tilted her head to the side, long blonde locks flinging every direction as she did so.

"Well," Andy began, "I'm grounded for the next week. So, I'm not allowed to be out of the house except for school. That doesn't include studying." Andy winced and peered up at Jamie through her lashes. Jamie was shifting her weight from foot to foot, contemplating everything.

"What about if I go to yours?" Jamie inquired, trying to think of a solution.

Andy shook her head. "No friends."

"Not even studying?"

"Nope. Christopher, well, you know how he is. He'll make a fuss, and call mum and dad and tell 'em we were smoking or doing drugs or something."

Jamie nodded, knowing that Andy wasn't exaggerating. Christopher, although held his 'cool' persona and adored his sister, loved getting her into trouble. It was the way the Fisher family functioned.

"Oh well," Jamie sighed. "Guess no study sessions this week, huh?" Andy nodded with a sad smile. "I'd better get to class. I have Mr Peterson for homeroom."

Andy grimaced, feeling sorry for the blonde. No one wanted Mr Peterson. "Bye, Jamie. See ya around."

Jamie sent her a final grin. "Bye, Andy."

Andy sat in Mr Clarke's science room, doodling in her notebook and, admittedly, not paying attention. It wasn't that she didn't love Mr Clarke's lessons, it was just that she was in a strange mood and didn't feel motivated to do anything that day. The bell ringing jolted Andy from her small doodle of something resembling the space invaders game and bringing her attention to Mr Clarke, who was shouting over the rustling of students rushing to leave.

"Remember, finish chapter 12 and answer 12.3 on the difference between an experiment and other forms of scientific investigation. This will be on the test, which will cover chapters ten through twelve." Mr Clarke began trailing off as students left the classroom, "It will be multiple choice with an essay section." The door clicked shut.

Andy hadn't moved from her spot until now, knowing Lucas, Mike and Dustin would want to talk to Mr Clarke about something for the AV Club.

"So, did it come?" Mike asked excitedly.

"Sorry, boys," Mr Clarke's voice was low, a bit upset. "I hate to be the bearer of bad news but..." suddenly, his voice shifted to the usual happy, upbeat Mr Clarke voice they were all accustomed to, "it came!"

The boys cheered and began to follow Mr Clarke out of the classroom. Dustin turned to face Andy, who was lugging her bag over her shoulder. "Are you coming, 'Dessa?" He questioned, knowing that, although she occasionally joined them in the AV Club room, Andy was not a member of the AV Club.

Andy shook her head, sending Dustin a small smile. "Nah, sorry Dustin. I'm going to call Miss Byers and see if Will's alright."

Dustin sighed. "He's probably just sick, 'Dessa."

"I know," Andy stated strongly, "all the more reason for me to call

now. I can't go over there after school to check on him, so I'll just call." Dustin frowned but nodded.

"Good luck then, I guess." He walked out the door, jogging to catch up with the rest of the Party.

Andy jogged out of the classroom, holding her bag in her hand as she began to pick through it for change. As she was looking down at her hands, she didn't notice anyone until she crashed into them. "Oh sorry!" Andy cried as she dropped all her coins, looking to see who it was she'd ran into. The principal, of course.

"Ah, Andessa, just who we were looking for." Principal Coleman hummed. Andy peered around the principal and saw the Chief of Police, Jim Hopper, and another officer, Phil Callahan, standing behind him. Andy gulped. "Could you please go and wait in my office? Feel free to pick up your pennies." Andy waited until they'd passed her before she lunged to the ground and picked up as many of the coins as she could. Once she'd gathered a decent amount, around a third still laying on the floor, she began the trip to the principal's office, a place she hadn't been since she'd enrolled in Hawkins Middle.

She'd been sitting in the office for not even five minutes when the door opened and Mike, Lucas and Dustin toppled in. Andy jumped in surprise, not expecting the trio. "Andy?" They questioned in shock.

"Yes, kids, Andessa's here too," Chief Hopper strolled into the room, pointedly glancing at the lounge. "We have some questions to ask you."

Lucas, Mike and Dustin spoke over each other loudly, trying to get a point across as they attempted to garner the Chief's attention. Andy was sat still in shock. Will was... missing? It seemed like an impossible bad dream. Will just *couldn't* be missing, he couldn't!

"Okay, okay, okay," the chief interrupted, "One at a time, alright?" He gestured at Mike, "You." Mike nodded to show he was listening. "You said he takes what?"

"Mirkwood," Mike was quick to say. Andy frowned. They made it sound like Will took some kind of drug.

The chief repeated what he said slower. "Mirkwood?"

Mike bobbed his head. "Yeah."

"Have you ever heard of Mirkwood?" The chief inquired as he turned to Officer Callahan.

"I have not," the officer stated promptly. "That sounds made up to me."

"No," Lucas interjected. Andy resisted from rolling her eyes. This was bound to start an argument one way or another. "It's from *Lord of the Rings*."

"Well," Dustin started, "*The Hobbit*."

"It doesn't matter." Lucas shot back. Mike sent Andy a glance of exasperation.

Dustin was quick to defend himself, "he asked!"

"He axed!" Lucas mimicked.

"Shut up, guys," Mike told them sternly.

The chief leaned forward, irritation colouring his expression. "Hey, hey, hey! What'd I just say?" Lucas and Dustin turned to face him slowly. "One at a damn time." This time he gestured to Andy. "You."

Andy looked up in shock. "Um," she cleared her throat a bit, "Mirkwood is the name that they've given the road that Will rides on to get to his house from the Wheelers."

"It's where Cornwallis and Kerley meet." Mike finished, knowing Andy didn't know the actual names of the streets. Andy sent him a thankful look.

"Yeah, alright, I think I know that-" the chief turned to the officer.

"We can show you if you want," Mike interrupted.

This only made the chief angry. "I said that I know it!"

"We can help look." Mike had a determined expression coating his face.

Dustin nodded slightly, "yeah."

"No," the chief firmly stated.

The boys started clamouring, trying to get the chief to see their views and let them help. Andy said nothing. What could she do against the chief of police? "No," he barked, "after school, you are all to go home. Immediately." Andy stared down at her legs. It wasn't like she could go anywhere, anyway. Tyler would never allow it. *Christopher* would never allow it.

"That means," the chief continued, "no biking around looking for your friend, no investigatin', no nonsense. This isn't some *Lord of the Rings* book."

"*The Hobbit*," Dustin added. The chief sent him a firm stare, irritation and disbelief in his eyes.

Lucas sensed danger. "Shut up!" He warned, reaching over Mike to hit Dustin.

"Hey!" Dustin shouted, hitting back. Andy sighed and hid her face in her hands as Mike tried to break up the fight. She knew the Party was freaking out, but fighting really wasn't the way to prove themselves as mature to chief Hopper.

"Do I make myself clear?" the chief interrogated softly. He stood up, towering over the twelve-year-olds. "Do I make myself... clear?"

The boys frantically nodded in fear, calling out "yes, sir," quietly. Andy was ignored, she hadn't done much to make her presence known. Normally, being ignored would be something that'd drive Andy insane, but in this case, she didn't want the chief to associate her with the way the boys had behaved.

As soon as they had been given permission to leave, Andy stormed out of the office. "Hey, Andy? Where're ya goin'?" Dustin called after her. She heard the tell-tale sounds of three pairs of footsteps coming up behind her.

Andy whirled around to face them, eyes blazing. "Listen, I can not, *can not*, believe the way you-you *five-year-olds* were acting in there." She glared up at them, she'd never been more upset for her less than intimidating height. "William Byers, our best friend, is missing and you were arguing like it was just another D&D day." She stomped towards them. "Until you get your act together," she began backing away again, "don't talk to me!" She turned around and marched angrily out of the school, knowing her brothers and her parents would understand the reason behind skipping school.

It'd been a mistake to walk home. What'd usually be a five-minute drive and a fifteen-minute ride - she wasn't very fast, okay? - had turned into an fifty-minute walk. Not for the first time, Andy cursed her lack of fitness. Only fifteen minutes into the walk, Andy stopped and fell to the side of the road, sitting on her butt. She sat with her legs crossed and her elbows on her knees, resting on her head in her hands as she began to process everything.

Will Byers, sometime between yesterday night and this morning, had vanished. His mother, Joyce, couldn't find him and his brother, Jonathan, wasn't home to see if he'd even made it. Joyce had gone to the police station to gather the help of the chief, Jim Hopper, and they were now searching for him. She had been one of the last people to see Will last night. *That* was the most chilling fact of all.

Will was the youngest of the Party. The smallest, the thinnest. He pretty much always looked a bit ill and unsure of himself. All Andy had ever wanted to do was protect him. She wasn't dumb, she knew what others, including the rest of the Party, thought of her protectiveness over Will. She *liked* him. For a girl to be *that* protective over someone, she *had* to. But she didn't, not in the way they thought, at least. She knew that even Mike, Lucas and Dustin thought she held some endearment for the youngest boy, she did treat him a bit differently.

She didn't, she didn't mean to treat him any differently, it was just... The first time she'd met Will Byers, it'd been when he was thrown to the ground, verbally abused by two idiots with a combined IQ of 3. She'd protected him then, and it was a feeling that'd stayed with her since. She hadn't known him since kindergarten like Mike, or since the start of elementary school like Lucas, or even the start of forth grade like Dustin, she'd only known him for a year, and yet...

Andy was broken out of her thoughts by the familiar wail of a police siren. Andy sighed and stood up, brushing her shorts off as she did. The chief would've seen her by now, and would probably demand she get back to school. She'd guessed she would be okay now, she'd had time to think things through. Besides, there was only, she glanced down at her watch, and stared in stunned surprise, ten minutes left of school?!

The police car pulled up beside her and rolled the window down. It was the chief, and he did not look impressed. "Andessa, what the bloody hell do you think you're doing out here?!"

Andy kept her voice level as she spoke calmly, "sorry, chief, I was just... overwhelmed. I couldn't - I couldn't say in school at the moment, I just needed to think things through."

"And why didn't you ride home?" The chief raised his eyebrows, sceptical of her tale.

"I'm grounded," Andy shrugged, "my bikes chained and locked away in the shed at home. It's quite a long walk without my bike."

"And where," the chief replied, "do you live, exactly?"

"Aloris Crescent on Glader Hill, Loch Nora."

"That far, eh?" Andy nodded. The chief sighed, "get in. I'll drop you off."

Andy looked at him nervously. It was the chief of police... but did that mean she was safe? She sighed and shook her head, deciding to just go with it.

It didn't take the chief long to arrive at Andy's house and he whistled

a bit when he saw it. "You live here?" He asked sceptically.

"Yep." She replied promptly. "You can tell why I don't let people come to my house."

The chief nodded. "Okay, kid, you better get inside, I already called your brothers." Andy frowned. *When*, exactly, did he find time to call her brothers?

She smiled at him, however, and said a sincere, "thank you!" before piling out of the car and rushing to the front door. She took off her necklace and unlocked the front door with the key. She rushed inside, chucking her shoes off, and hurried upstairs to her room.

Andy's bedroom was located in the attic of the house, which meant she had a whole floor to herself. When she was little, it was so she could have her own playroom and 'classroom' for tutoring and homeschooling, but as she got older and stopped homeschooling, the playroom was converted into a closet and the 'classroom' into a study. Her actual sleeping room was simple and minimalistic. She had areas for practically everything, so her *bedroom*, bedroom, was actually for sleeping and she didn't see the need to put anything else in there. However, her dad, being her dad, didn't understand her logical thinking and stuffed a swing chair, a couch, a table, two extra beds and who knows what.

Andy collapsed on her bed, just in time to hear the front door open, followed by a loud "Andessa May!", courtesy of one Tyler Fisher. Loud slamming of feet running up the three flights of stairs alerted Andy of her brothers appearance. Her bedroom door slammed open and Tyler stormed in, closely followed by Christopher, who was smirking.

"What the fuck were you thinking?! Walking out of school like that?! You're friends called us, well, they sent a note to the High School and *then*, we're called up to the office to be told that 10 minutes 'till the end of school, the chief had picked you up and taken you home! Where the fuck were you in between?!"

"NOTHING! I wasn't doing anything!" Andy stood up, shouting over to her brother. "Will's gone missing! I just needed time to process

everything, *not* in the school bathrooms for once! It would've taken me forever to get home, anyway, I don't have my bike! I probably would've -"

"-Wait," Christopher interjected, "Will's missing?" Andy sighed and nodded, looking down. Tyler took a deep breath, calming down. Christopher faced his older brother, "Ty, if Will's missing, maybe we should volunteer?" Tyler shook his head.

"I can't," he said sadly, "not tonight, anyway. I've got that debate on. I'm supposed to be gone already. If," he turned and looked at his younger sister, "Will is still missing tomorrow, I'll stay here and help Joyce. I won't go to school tomorrow, okay?" Andy nodded, that was fair enough, she supposed.

"I can do it." Christopher offered. Tyler immediately shook his head.

"No way, Christopher. Someone has to be home and look after Andy. What if she vanishes too?"

"But he's my best friend!" Andy glared.

Christopher nodded, staring his older brother down, "what if it'd been Celia that'd disappeared last night? You'd want to be out there, searching for her." Andy hid a smirk. Bringing Tyler's best friend into the argument? Low, but effective.

He looked between the two youngest siblings. "Listen carefully, and listen closely. Mum and dad are planning on calling at ten tonight. I'll call at ten thirty. I suppose, if you absolutely have to go looking, you'd have until nine-thirty."

Andy high-fived her brother. Nine-thirty. That gave them more than enough time. Tyler pointed a warning finger at them, "but homework, dinner and studies first, okay? I'll be checking your study books when I get home." Andy held in a groan. Homework, dinner and study first? By the time they'd finished all that it'd be around seven-thirty, probably later.

A car beeped from outside. "Well, they've given me all the time they could," Tyler straightened his jacket by pulling on the lapels. Andy

blinked at the realisation that it was his debate team blazer. "I've got to go. Behave!" With that, Tyler was gone.

8:15

Andy sat at her desk in her study, head in her hands. *She* had eaten dinner, *she* had done her homework and *she* had finished all the study she could, but *Christopher* hadn't eaten dinner, *Christopher* hadn't done any homework and *Christopher* hadn't even opened his study book. Instead, Christopher's friend Steve had come over, talking about some kind of date with Nancy. Had she really defended Steve earlier? Because the Party was correct, Steve Harrington was a douchebag.

So Andy was sat at her desk, study book open with her school book and textbooks open beside it. She was studying ahead now. She had nothing else to do. She hadn't showered yet, she was hanging onto whatever hope that Steve would leave soon and Christopher would do what Tyler had said before nine-thirty, even though she logically knew it wouldn't happen. She was finishing off her Chapter 20 science notes when her walkie-talkie blared.

"Hey, 'Dessa, you there?" Dustin called. Andy sighed and picked up the SuperComm.

"Yeah, I'm here," she paused, "I *thought* I said not to talk to me?"

"I know you did, but, listen, Mike and Lucas are going out to search, I am too. Are you coming?"

Andy shot up. "I can only be out until nine-thirty."

"What?!"

"I'm grounded, you shithead." She reminded. "Mum and dad aren't home, so they're planning on calling sometime after nine-thirty."

"Okay, I guess. We'll meet up at Mirkwood."

Andy nodded. Mirkwood was extremely close to her house, she did live closer to Will than anyone else, even if the easiest turn was before Dustin's house. Boy, was she glad she hadn't showered.

The house had been empty when she left. Christopher and Steve must've gone to the Wheeler's to bother Nancy or something without her knowing. It was a quick ten minute walk to reach Mirkwood, and the boys were already waiting for her when she got there. "This is it." Lucas said in greeting, gesturing to the side of the road.

"I figured." Andy snarled, not in the mood to be polite to them.

Mike looked at her in apology, "Andy, we're, uh, we're sorry."

Andy snorted as thunder rumbled in the distance. "You, Micheal, have nothing to be sorry about. You were mature about everything." With that, she turned around and ducked under the borders, lighting up her torch as she did so.

"Hey," Dustin said behind her, "you feel that? I think maybe we should go back."

"No," Mike objected, "we're not going back. Just stay close. Come on."

Andy halted and waited for the Party to catch up with her. She shined the light on her watch. 8:33.

"Hey guys, wait up." Dustin cried as they began to move forward. Andy felt a bit of rain splatter on her head, but she ignored it as she paused again to wait for Dustin.

9:10

"Will!" Andy shouted as she pushed leaves aside. She was saturated and thunder was rumbling in the distance.

"Will! Will!" Mike screamed.

Lucas wiped some water out of his eyes. "Byers!"

"I got your *X-Men 134!*" Dustin cried, holding said comic in a plastic sleeve. "Guys I really think we should turn back."

Andy hummed. It was almost nine-thirty. She could afford to be a

little bit late, but not excessively.

"Seriously, Dustin?" Lucas spat. "You wanna be a baby? Then go home already."

"Guys," Andy called, "it's almost 9:15, I better get home with in the next half an hour, or my ass is grass."

Mike seemed to have suddenly remembered her grounding. "Okay then, another ten minutes." He said with authority.

"This is a democracy, not a dictatorship! We'll keep searching while Andy and the baby go home." Lucas screeched.

"I'm just being realistic, Lucas!" Dustin defended. Andy rolled her eyes. It seemed that Lucas and Dustin would be Lucas and Dustin no matter the circumstances.

"No, you're just being a big sissy!" Lucas shot back.

Dustin was quick to remind them all of the danger they were in. "Did you ever think Will went missing because he ran into something bad?"

Here, Andy had to interject, "yes, I have thought of that, Dustin, thanks for bringing it up."

She was, of course, ignored, "and we're going to the exact same spot where he was last seen? And we have no weapons or anything?"

Andy froze a bit, before soldiering on. As long as she found Will, she was fine with being kidnapped. She could see Mike hesitating out of the corner of her eye.

"Dustin, shut up," Mike snapped, most likely scared by the reminder.

"I'm just saying," Dustin pressed, "does that seem smart to you?"

"Shut up, shut up," he said again, tilting his head, "do you guys hear that?"

Andy listened, and could faintly hear the sound of leafs cracking.

Someone was coming towards them. A bush rustled. Andy gave a small shriek and backed into the boys. Another rustle. They all spun around, and Mike's flashlight landed on a small... boy? No, a girl, wearing an oversized t-shirt. Andy panted in fright as she stared up and the squinting girl.

She was *not* expecting that.

3. 2

WARNING: THIS STORY CONTAINS CANON-TYPICAL AND NON-CANON-TYPICAL SWEARING. THE 'F' WORD IS USED A RECORDED ONE TIME THIS CHAPTER

Andy gulped as she led the Party, plus the edition of the strange girl towards her house. She was finally going to do it, she was finally showing people the Victorian monstrosity that was her house. It was something she'd never pictured herself doing, but she had to because "*Micheal, my house is closer for once, dammit!*" Lucas and Dustin were squabbling behind her, while Mike gently pulled the girl along.

"Hey, Andy!" Mike called up to her. Andy moved her head a bit so he knew she was listening. "How far away are we?"

Andy could see the back door in the distance through the rain. "We're here." She shouted back, wrenching the back door open. She hadn't locked it, in case she needed a quick way to run in. Lucas and Dustin stopped in shock. Mike rushed past them, guiding the girl with him.

"This," Lucas shouted as he jogged in, almost slipping on the tiles, "is your house?"

Andy nodded with an embarrassed sigh. "Yep, and it'll be empty for another two weeks or so, besides my brothers that is."

Dustin opened his mouth, ready to say something when a loud ringing infiltrated the house. The girl flinched and looked afraid, but Andy looked down at her watch and cursed. It was ten o'clock. She sprinted through the house, sliding on the tiles expertly as she did so. "Take her to the attic!" She called to the boys as she reached the phone. She quickly took the phone off the wall and spoke, "Hello, this is the Fisher residence. Andessa Fisher here."

There was a relieved sigh. "*Oh, Logan, she's here!*" Her mum's voice filtered through the phone. "*I'm proud of you, honey! I heard what'd happened with the Byers boy you're so fond of and I thought you'd gone out looking.*"

Andy gulped. "Of course not, mama, you know me, I wouldn't leave the house under grounding rules." She gave a nervous laugh and cured herself silently. Really? That's all she had to say? *Really?*

"*Good job, pumpkin,*" her dad cried, *"I knew we could trust you. Is Tyler or Christopher there? We'd like to see how you handled it."*

"They're not here," Andy began to sweat. She had no idea where Christopher was. "Tyler's in Nashville, he has a debate."

"*Oh yes, I remember him telling me.*" Her mum replied. Andy raised an eyebrow, were they passing the phone back and forth? "*What about Chrissy?*"

Andy held in a snicker at the nickname, "no, he's not here either, I think he went with Tyler." She began banging her head on the wall quietly, knowing she'd messed up. Christopher, for all the supportive brother he was, really wasn't that interested in Tyler's debate stuff. When Tyler'd first started out, Christopher had gone with him to every meeting, every debate, but that'd been years ago, when Andy had only been six or seven, maybe eight?, he'd stopped doing that by the time they were in their last year of middle school.

"*Andessa May,*" her mum started, but was cut off by her dad's voice.

"*Really? That's great! They haven't done that in awhile, it'll be a great bond - Denise, please. Go rest, I want a talk with my daughter. Stop trying to take the phone.*" The was a slight scuffle on the other end of the line. Andy rolled her eyes. Her parents had been married for twenty-five years now, and they still managed to act like the teenage best friends they had once been.

"*So, kiddo,*" her dad whispered, *"your mum's in the other room. Where's your brother, really?"*

Andy sighed and leaned against the wall, "I don't know dad. Steve was over earlier and they were talking about some kind of date. Tyler is in Nashville, though."

Logan scoffed, "*he left you all on your own when another kid's gone missing?! I'm going to have words with that boy when I get home.*"

Andy grinned. Her dad was a gift to the world. "Thanks, dad. I'd better go, I just got out of the shower," she fibbed.

"Alrighty then kiddo," her dad chuckled, "bye. love ya!"

"Love you." She placed the phone back in its holder and sighed, falling against the wall.

"Hey, 'Dessa." Andy whirled around. Dustin was standing there, his pants and shoes leaving wet trails on the ground. "Do you have any clothes we could use?"

Andy snorted and nodded. "Yep, go back upstairs, I'll go grab some of Christopher's stuff." Dustin turned around and sprinted up the staircase, almost falling over on the tiles.

She was about to to Christopher's room when she remembered Tyler's promise to call. Thinking on her feet, Andy placed a note on the wall beside the phone, reading

'Sorry, Tyler, Christopher was asleep and I was in the shower when you called.

Couldn't pick up and didn't know the number to call you back.

- Andy'

Andy calmly exited the kitchen and went into Christopher's room. Christopher's room was on the first floor of the house and was connected to Tyler's bedroom through joined bathrooms. Christopher's bedroom, much like Christopher himself, was very sports themed, with wooden floors lined with tape and a basketball hoop directly across for the bed. His closet, while large, was more contained and well hidden than any of the other Fisher's.

Andy quickly slid open the closet doors, grabbed three pairs of sweatpants and shirts and left the room quickly, knowing that, although Christopher was rather relaxed with others in his room, he wouldn't appreciate her in his closet. She reached her bedroom in record time, just as she heard the boys beginning to interrogate the girl they'd found.

"Is there a number we can call for your parents?" Mike rushed.

"Where's your hair? Do you have cancer?" Dustin interrogated, followed closely by Lucas's question.

"Did you run away?" Andy rolled her eyes and huffed, pausing to rest as she placed her hands on her knees. Why, exactly, did her parents put so many stairs in this house?!

"Are you in trouble?" That was Mike.

"Is that blood?" there was a pause, then a smacking sound. Andy panted a bit, she'd never tried to run up the staircase before. Damn her and her unfit self!

"Stop it, you're freaking her out!" Mike again. Andy finally stood back up and began jogging back up the stairs. She bet it didn't help that she was wet while doing this.

"She's freaking me out!" Lucas shouted. *Oh well*, Andy thought distantly, *at least I'm getting a good workout*.

"I bet she's deaf!" There was a faint clap after Dustin's statement. "Not deaf," Dustin said quieter.

"Alright that's enough, all right?" Mike started, just as Andy *finally* reached her room. She slammed the door open.

"Alright!" Andy shouted as she entered the room. She grimaced when she saw the girl flinch. "Here's your clothes boys," she pushed the items into Mike's chest, "bathrooms the next door down, go get changed, have showers, whatever it is you weirdo's need to get changed, and I'll help the little miss here, it is my house after all." She commanded, pushing them towards the door.

After she'd shut the door, she turned to face the girl. She was frightened, edging away from Andy. "Hey," Andy spoke kindly, slowly approaching the girl, "I'm Andy. Let's get you changed." She bent down and reached for girl's hand, but the girl moved it. Andy was reminded of a frightened animal. "It's okay, I'm just going to take you to get into warmer clothes." The girl studied her face for a minute before slowly sliding her hand into Andy's. Andy sent her a small

smile.

"Come on." She gently led her out of her bedroom and towards her closet. She watched the girl's face glow in curiosity as she looked around her at the large wardrobe. "Let's get into something comfy, eh?" It didn't take long for Andy to find something in the girl's size. She was smaller than her, sure, but Andy still had plenty of clothes from before her last weight gain.

"Now, I know they're not really... appropriate," Andy started as she helped the girl out of the wet shirt, "but the most important thing right now is that we're comfy and cosy, and these are the way to do that." Unfortunately, all of Andy's sweatpants were in the wash, so she'd had to give the girl (and herself) a pair of thick shorts. The shorts were tiny and made for bedwear only, but Andy, having worn them herself a fair amount, knew they were just as warm as they were silky.

"Sorry I don't have any long sleeved shirts for you," Andy apologized, handing the girl her sweater as well as a silk robe, "but I know these will keep you extra warm because," she sent the girl a cheeky grin, "we have electric blankets."

"Electric blankets?" Andy baulked as slowly turned to face the girl. Had she imagined that?

"Pardon me, but what did you say?"

The girl seemed a little unsure, but repeated, "electric blankets?" Her pronunciation was the tiniest bit off and her voice was cracking as though it wasn't used often.

Andy cleared her throat and attempted to explain, "well, electric blankets are blankets that you can choose the heat of. Like if you're really cold, you can make it warmer. Now then," she looked over at the girl and smiled, "let's get back to those boys." She held her hand out and once again, the girl slid her hand into hers. She was a bit worried about how the boys would react to their clothes (pink is El [with Andy's sweater], orange is Andy), but shook off those thoughts. This was what she always wore to bed, there was no way either she or the girl would fit into Christopher's clothes, so the Party would

have to suck it up and deal with it like the mature teens they weren't.

"We're back!" Andy cheered, throwing the door open once again. The Party was bundled in a corner, talking and wearing clothes comically too big for them. All at once, they turned and faced the duo before their eyes widened and they spun back around again.

"Andy, that's really not appropriate," Mike called over his shoulder, the tips of his ears bright red.

Andy rolled her eyes and raised an eyebrow, "well, we're going to sleep soon, asshole, so we're wearing pajamas. Frankly, I don't think my bed cares if what I'm wearing is appropriate." Slowly, the boys turned and faced them. Andy quickly led the girl over to the couch and handed her one of the colouring books she had rested on her coffee.

Andy had gathered quite a collection of colouring books over the years, some completed, some almost and some empty. The one on the coffee table had only one picture completed, and despite its owner being twelve-years of age, still had some of the colours out of the lines. Andy never was good at art, that was always Will's thing. Andy felt a pain in her chest at the thought of Will.

Shaking it off, she gave the pencils to the girl and said with a smile, "why don't you try and fill this out?" Once she saw that the girl was happily occupied with colouring in, Andy rushed back over to the party.

"Alright, here's the plan," Andy could here Mike start as she approached.

"She'll stay at my place tonight," Andy cut in, "and tomorrow I'll drop her off at one of your places."

Lucas stepped back in shock, "no you will not! Are you shitting me? Are you actually serious about this?"

Andy gave him a blank look. "Yes, Lucas, I am serious. I won't be home tomorrow, Christopher won't be at home tomorrow, Tyler will be helping Mrs Byers tomorrow and my parents are who the fuck

knows where. I can't leave her here. She'll spend the night with me though, and I'll give her clothes for tomorrow," Andy stated with authority.

Lucas shook his head. "She sure as hell ain't coming to mine!"

"Or mine!" Dustin piped up, glancing between the two.

Mike didn't say anything, he just stared at the floor. He'd accepted his fate. *Good boy*, Andy thought.

"Listen, Andy," Lucas speculated, "have you ever thought maybe there is something wrong with her? Like... wrong in the head? For all we know she escaped from Pennhurst."

"From where?" Mike interjected, raising an eyebrow in Lucas's direction.

"The nuthouse in Kerley County," Lucas informed swiftly.

Dustin smirked, "you got a lit of family there?" Andy rolled her eyes. Not another argument. She quickly glanced back at the girl, who was still colouring away happily.

Lucas turned to face Dustin and said snappily, "bite me." Andy glanced at Mike and saw him rolling his eyes too. The two shared a look of annoyance. "Seriously though, think about it," Lucas told them, seeing their disbelief. "That would explain her shaved head and why she's so crazy."

"Why she won't speak," Dustin breathed, glancing nervously at Andy. Andy noticed and sighed, taking into account what they were saying.

"She's an escapee is the point," Lucas reminded, "she's probably a psycho."

"Like Micheal Myers," Dustin fearfully claimed.

Andy sighed and added, "it does sound very 'horror movie'." Mike shot her a look of confusion. '*You're going along with this?*' his eyes seemed to say. Andy shrugged. Although she didn't like to admit it, the weirdos had a point.

"Exactly!" Lucas proclaimed, "we should've never brought her here!"

"So," Mike argued, "you just wanted to leave her out there in that storm?"

"Yes!" Lucas retaliated. "We went out to find Will, not another problem."

"I think we should tell an adult," Dustin advised nervously.

Andy immediately shook her head. "No, are you kidding me?! The minute we tell an adult, is the minute we go under lock down!"

"That's crazy!" Mike agreed, "we weren't even supposed to be out tonight, remember? If we tell an adult they'll tell my mum, she's bound to tell your mum and your mum..." Mike trailed off.

Andy's eyes widened at the thought. "Oh man," Dustin moaned.

"Our houses become Alcatraz," Lucas muttered, realising the problems with their plan.

"We'll never find Will," with those words, Mike had gained control of the Party. "Let's stick with Andy's plan. She'll spend the night here and-wait!" He turned to face Andy, "you don't have your bike."

Andy shook her head, "Don't worry, I can get around Tyler and Christopher easily enough."

Mike seemed nervous, but agreed, "alright then, so you'll drop her off at my house tomorrow and ride straight to school. She'll come to the front door and rings the doorbell. My mum will answer and know exactly what to do." Mike explained. Andy studied the boys faces. Mike was winning them over, she could tell. "She'll send her back to Pennhurst or wherever she's from. We'll be totally in the clear. And tomorrow night we'll go back out. And this time, we'll find Will."

"Tyler's back tomorrow night," Andy mumbled, "it'll be harder for me to sneak out."

The Party sighed at the reminder of Andy's grounding. "Christopher was at my place, by the way." Mike suddenly said.

Andy groaned and placed her head in her hands. "Why?" She said, almost brokenly.

"I don't know, he was boosting Steve Harrington though Nancy's window."

Andy groaned a second time, before looking up at the boys. "You'd better get home. I'll be there extra early tomorrow." She paused for a moment before muttering, "or I'll try, at least." They nodded before slowly gathering their wet clothes and exiting the room. Andy went back to towards the girl and watched over her shoulder. She blinked in surprise when she noticed that the image she was colouring in was rather artsy. There were some places where it was too dark and others where the colours completely missed the lines, but it was possible even better than what she'd done.

"Hey," she said softly, making the girl aware of her presence. The girl immediately stiffened. Andy came around to the front of the couch and kneeled in front of the girl. "Come on, lets get you settled." She held out her hand for the girl to take and gently led her over to one of the extra beds in her room. "I know," she sighed, taking in the girls look of shock, "it's excessive, but my dad's very... out there."

"Your... papa?" Andy's head snapped up when the girl spoke for a second time.

She gave her a grin, "yeah, my papa." She shifted a bit as she watched the girl carefully place herself underneath the covers. "So," she began tentatively, "what's your name?"

The girl eyed her a bit before slowly pulling Andy's sweater back to reveal a tattoo. 011. Andy gasped in shock and barely refrained from grabbing at the girls hand. It looked familiar. Why did it look familiar?! Andy wracked her brain, but not a single image came to mind. She exhaled nervously, faintly wondering why a young girl, seemingly around her age, had a tattoo, but any thoughts were held back by the familiarity of the small, three-digit tattoo.

Questions swirled around her head, making her dizzy. Why did this girl have a tattoo? Where did she get the tattoo? How did she get her parents permission to get a tattoo? Did she even have parents?

"What... what's that mean?" She asked instead, ignoring any other inquiry. The girl pointed to herself. Andy stared in shock. The girl's name was Eleven? That rang a bell in Andy's mind, but it was unfamiliar, not as precise as the ones the tattoo rang. *Where* had she heard it? Why, oh *why*, did it all seem so familiar?!

"Your names... your name is Eleven?" She repeated, hoping desperately that the girl would shake her head and correct her. That didn't happen. Instead, the girl nodded, looking up at Andy with trusting eyes. Andy sighed. "Eleven, huh? That's hard to come up with a nickname for," Andy tried to giggle, but the heavy atmosphere placed a damper on any happiness Andy tried to emit. "Like I said, I'm Andy, Andy Fisher," she leaned down to look the girl in the eyes. "Tomorrow, I'll take you over to Mike's. Mike is the boy who led you here," she quickly clarified, "he'll look after you tomorrow." The girl, Eleven apparently, nodded a bit, an unsure expression crossing her face.

"Good night," Andy whispered, "I'll be just over there." She turned and pointed in the direction of her bed, which was just across the room from the sleepover beds. The girl, once again, nodded and Andy stood up, crossed over to her bed and attempted to get a wink of sleep after that day's adventure.

Andy panted, legs pushing her faster as she ran. She glanced behind her, but couldn't see anything. What was she running from? Who was she running from? She desperately tried to stop herself from running, she was tired, she needed a rest, but she couldn't stop. It was as if something else, or someone else was controlling her movements, and she wasn't allowed to pause for anything.

With her eyes firmly placed on the trees behind her, her foot caught on a wayward branch and she went tumbling to the ground. The world around her spun on its axis, trees tilting and dead bark flying into her face. Her arm jerked, desperately trying to catch her, only to end up underneath her. Andy let out a muffled scream as landed, salty tears crawling down her cheeks as her other hand came up to her mouth.

She needed to be quiet. She couldn't draw its attention to her. She couldn't make a sound.

Strange clicking echoed through her ears and the trees rustled. A low growl emerged from the forest as twigs began snapping in her direction. She pressed her hand harder to her mouth and shuffled closer to the tree, whimpering as her arm began to ache. The noises quickly passed. She breathed out a sigh of relief and cucooned herself into the tree, pushing herself as close to it as she could.

'I need to get home,' the thought suddenly crossed her mind, echoing in a strange way, as if it was the only thing she could think of at the moment. She closed her eyes, letting the thought of her nice warm bed, loving family and amazing friends lull her to sleep.

Tuesday, November 8th, 1983.

The Fisher Residence.

It was quiet in the dining room. Andy was staring down at her breakfast, her usual morning moodiness in full force - however, her grumpiness was for once founded, she must've slept weirdly on her arm last night, it hurt like crazy -, Tyler was eating, a contemplative look across his face, and Christopher was clutching his head in his hands with a glass of water beside him. The youngest boy had gone out drinking with another friend of his - James Miller, if Andy remembered correctly - to celebrate Steve hooking up with one Nancy Wheeler before picking up Steve - thankfully, before he'd drank too much - and the trio had gone back to James's house to drink even more. Steve had brought Christopher home at three in the morning, where Tyler had been anxiously waiting.

Tyler had returned home at one in the morning after yet another successful debate, checked on his sister briefly and then spent the next two hours searching for his younger brother. The minute Chris had been dumped into his arms by a slightly worried and a tiny bit drunk Steve, he'd called his parents hotel and had a long chat. It was safe to say that Chris was now grounded as well.

"Well," Tyler's voice jolted Andy out of her grumpy state and Christopher groaned, "mum and dad have given me permission to spend the day helping Joyce, Christopher's forbidden from driving - and probably shouldn't anyway." He paused a bit to study his twin

worriedly. "Andy, I think you're gonna ride today, if I drop you off at school, the Middle School will tell the High School and I'll get detention for playin' hookey, which means a suspension from the debate team, just when we advanced to finals." He gave a deep breath, "I'll unlock your bike and I expect you to be gone before Patricia arrives." He looked at her sternly.

Andy tilted her head down and replied obediently, "yes, Tyler."

Tyler smirked, "good," he turned to face his twin. "Christopher, you're staying here today. I'll call Celia and get her to write extra notes for me. You'd better call Steve, or Jimmy or whoever it is that you get notes from," he ordered. Christopher moved his head a bit, before letting out another moan. Tyler gazed at his two siblings, one with a hangover, the other her usual grumpy self, and sighed, "go get ready." Hearing the magic words, Andy sprinted out of her seat, abandoning her plate of eggs and toast, and ran up to her room.

She quickly rushed to her closet and threw on a black tank top that stopped just under her ribs, a sheer, red floral, long sleeved shirt, blue pants and a pair of black Mary Jane shoes with a daring heel. She usually wasn't one for heels, but her converse shoes had become a bit (very) dirty after last night's escapade and she assumed Eleven wouldn't be able to walk in heels. Looping her belt through her jeans, Andy stumbled out of her closet and sprinted a bit towards her bedroom, hoping Eleven was either still asleep or just waking up. Distantly, she heard the sound of the car leaving the driveway.

She flew into her bedroom, slamming the door open. Eleven, who was crossing the room, flinched. Andy grimaced and apologized quickly, "sorry, Eleven." She sent the girl a smirk, trying to repress her morning grumpiness. Goodness knows the shy girl didn't need a cranky Andy around her. "Let's get you dressed, we've still got a while."

Jealousy, astonishment and pride filled Andy's body as she stared at Eleven. She'd forced the girl into one of her old dresses, not that she'd had to try too hard. It was a bit too large for the quiet girl and had a white top and a flowing navy skirt. She'd given Eleven her last pair of sneakers (her black converse), an older, but still working, watch, a

too small pair of leather gloves and one of her jackets that was huge on the small figure of Eleven.

Eleven was looking herself over in the mirror when a sudden thought hit Andy like a bat in a wack-a-mole game. Rushing around to her accessories draw, she grabbed a pair of her mum's old sunglasses and a black sun hat off of her hat stand. As beautiful as she looked, Andy would never be able to pass Eleven off as one of her rich friends if she had a buzz cut. The glasses were honestly there just to pull off the look.

The jealousy filtered out of Andy's body when she caught Eleven's look of wonder as she stared at herself in the mirror. In that moment, Andy remembered just where and how they'd found Eleven and exactly how little she must've been treated with in her short life, to be this awed by second hand clothing. So what if Eleven looked better in the clothes that were worn and old than Andy had when they were brand new? Clearly, the young girl needed them more.

"Come on," Andy broke Eleven out of her daze, and the girl turned to face Andy, "let's get you some food and be on our way." She gently grasped the girl's wrist and lead her down the stairs to the kitchen. Thinking quickly, she threw a few Eggo waffles into the toaster and grabbed the keys Tyler'd left on the table.

"I'm going to take you to Mike's today," Andy started, eyeing Eleven in the reflection of the pristine silver toaster. "Mike's the boy who helped you yesterday. What we're gonna do is, while Mike, Lucas, Dustin and I are at school, you're gonna knock on the front door and ask Mrs Wheeler, Mike's mum, for help." She spun around to face Eleven with a smile. "That okay?"

Eleven shook her head and the smile slid off of Andy's. "No," Eleven firmly stated, staring Andy down with an intense look.

Andy raised an eyebrow. "Why the hell not?" She examined the girl closely, taking in the hardened gaze, hiding worry and fear, and froze in place, an idea in mind. "Are... are you in trouble?" She inquired carefully, scanning Eleven with a careful eye. "Involved in something that can harm us?"

Eleven looked up, and nodded slowly. Andy exhaled fearfully, her breath coming out in pants. "W-who-" Andy's question was cut off by the pop of the toaster. Andy jumped, flinging herself away from the Eggo waffles that's almost flown out of the toaster. Andy laughed nervously before hurridely grabbing a plate and placing the waffles on them.

"Here," she gave the plate to Eleven with a soft, but now worried, smile, "I have to get my bike, but you just stay here and eat these, okay?" Eleven nodded before tearing into the waffles with surprising vigour. Andy watched for a moment with a smirk, but a quick glance at the clock reminded her what she needed to be doing.

She ran over to the grandfather clock, opened the small glass panel and gently pulled the shed key from its 'hiding' place. Andy held it up with a smirk, her mum never was good at hiding things. It was a quick twist to open the shed and unlock her bike and, as soon as Andy had secured the small cushioned seat onto the back (usually reserved for Jamie), she and Eleven were off.

"Hi Mrs Wheeler!" Andy cheerfully greeted as the front door swung open.

Mrs Wheeler gave Andy a smile. "Hello Andessa. Mike's in the basement," she turned her gaze onto Eleven. "Hello to you too. Who are you, I wasn't aware Mike had more female friends?"

Andy panicked when she saw Eleven's mouth start to open. "This is my cousin!" She practically shouted. As soon as she said that, Andy knew she'd made a mistake. The Wheelers, along with the Harringtons and the Moore's, had been close family friends to the Fishers since their arrival in Hawkins over four years ago. Mrs Wheeler was sure to call her mum and ask about it.

"Her names Ele-" she silently panicked, wondering what to say. She couldn't very well say that Eleven's name was a number, could she?!

Mrs Wheeler seemed puzzled, but sent a motherly look Eleven's way. "Hello, Ellie. I'm Karen Wheeler, Mike's mum. I'm assuming she's riding to school with you, as well?"

Eleven began to nod, but Andy interrupted once again. "Oh no, Mrs Wheeler, Elev- Ellie just wanted to wish me goodbye." Mrs Wheeler looked between to two girls, before hesitantly nodding. She turned around and walked back inside, presumably to answer Holly's cry. Andy made a gesture to the small back door near the basement. "Go to that door, I'll let you in," she murmured and near sprinted inside, shutting the door behind her.

"Andy! Is she here?" Mike questioned once Andy arrived in the basement. Andy ignored him, and opened the basement door. Eleven sent her a small smile. "Wait, Andy, why's she dressed so nicely? We're supposed to send her back, remember?!" Mike demanded.

Andy whirled around and faced him, a glare in place. "Michael Wheeler, you will sit your ass down, talk to her, and you'll realise why we can't just 'send her back'." Mike froze. Andy noticed and sighed guiltily. "Mike, listen, its already 8:15. If I don't leave now and get my ass to school on time, there's no way Tyler's gonna ease up on me. Which means," she leaned in close to whisper, "I won't be able to help find Will. I'm gonna go now, and you quickly talk to her." She sent Eleven a final smile and said a quick, "Bye Eleven," before she turned around and sprinted up the staircase.

"Mrs Wheeler, Mike's just gathering some of our class notes, I'm gonna go ahead, okay?" At Mrs Wheeler's answering wave, Andy left the Wheeler house, hoping that Mike would see reason and help Eleven rather than turn her in.

She ended up being a minute late to school, but they, thankfully, had Mr Clarke first, who was well acquainted with Andy's late habits. "Andy, where's Mike?" Dustin whispered to the girl. Andy leaned her head out the door and searched the hall for Mike.

Unknowingly, she raised a hand to her mouth, chewing on her nail. "I... I don't know. I dropped Eleven off at his house this morning and I just assumed he was behind me."

"Eleven?" She turned her head to look over at Lucas, who had his eyebrow raised. She opened her mouth to begin explaining, but Mr Clarke called the class to attention.

"I'll tell you during lunch." She whispered to them, hurriedly pulling out her notebook and pencil case.

She didn't get the chance to. Jamie cornered her during third period and, after over an hour of pleading, convinced Andy to come with her to the library to study. "Here," Andy explained to Jamie, pointing at her worksheet, "you've worked out all the equations, it's just your indices you've messed up."

Jamie frowned, Andy's spare glasses perched on her nose jokingly. "Wait, what? Which ones are the indices again?" Andy sighed quietly. It was meant to be a small, stress reliever, she'd been worrying about Mike's whereabouts and Eleven's tragic past all day, but the sigh was picked up by Jamie's sensitive ears, and the girl immediately burst into tears. "I don't know!" She cried as softly as she could to avoid getting kicked out, "I'm sorry." A surge of hopelessness surged through Andy as the blonde put her head down on her notebook and began to sob.

"James, Jamie, honey, why're you crying?" Andy said, tears welling up in her eyes.

Jamie didn't lift her head, but her choked voice filtered to Andy's ears, "because I'm stupid!"

Andy looked down at her in shock. Who'd dare call Jamie stupid? Why'd Jamie herself even think that? Sure, she'd been held back a year, but by no means was Jayden 'Jamie' Kalum stupid. Besides, Jamie was one of the most popular girls in Hawkins School, elementary, middle and high school combined; Andy couldn't think of a single person who'd ever lash out at her.

"What the everloving Lord made you think that?!" she demanded. Jamie sighed, but still didn't lift her head up.

"Katie Holwer in my Science class. She said," her voice warbled, "that I'm a good-for-nothing whore and I'll never amount to anything." Andy's mouth dropped open. Quickly, she committed the name to her memory. Katie Howler. It wasn't a name she'd ever heard before.

"Jayden Kalum," Andy started, her voice stern but reassuring, "first off, you are not a whore. You dress... 'alternatively'. Katie's just jealous you have an impeccable style." It wasn't a lie. Jamie's dress was always a topic of discussion among the school, but, overall, it didn't break any rules. Tyler had once joked about putting the school's four debate teams (a male and female in the middle school and a male and female in the high school) against each other to argue the case for and against Jamie's... interesting tastes.

"Second, you are a brilliant girl, smarts and all. We both know," Andy reached out to gently brush Jamie's hair off her face, "that you went through some rough things last year. If you hadn't, you know you would've ended up being one of the most achieved students, not to mention taken the role of cheer captain, like you always do." Cheerleading was one of the many things Jamie's foster parents had forced her to give up after her slump last year. It'd crushed her, Andy knew, but, on the days the two weren't studying, Jamie would practice her splits, jumps and whatnot. Andy didn't really know, she failed PE every year. "So, no, you're not stupid and if you even suggest that ."

Jamie sniffled before nodding hesitantly and sitting upright. Andy gave her a gentle smile, "now," she gestured back to the paper, "*these* are the indices."

They continued their studying for another ten minutes when Dustin sprinted up to the table. He looked wearily over at Jamie and leaned down beside Andy, whispering "Mike's called us all to his place at the end of the day." Andy glanced at him out the corner of her eye, and gave a small nod, nerves erupting through her. Why'd Mike call them? Were they reinforcements? Had something gone wrong with Eleven?

"Andy," Andy blinked, looking up at Jamie's concerned face, "what was that about?"

Andy shook her head with a small, weary smile. "Nothing, James." Quickly, she looked back down at the sheet, "so what you need to do..."

"Absolutely not," Tyler said through the phone, voice strict.

Andy groaned, glancing at the bustling hallway behind her. "Com'on, Tyler, please."

"No!" He huffed, "Andessa May, you are not going to break mum and dad's rules and go over to Mike's after school, your punishments in place for a reason, Andy, stick by it." Andy opened her mouth to say something but was cut off by the phone clicking.

Her mouth dropped open in shock. "He hung up on me!" She exclaimed, turning to face Dustin and Lucas. The boys shrugged.

"Try Christopher," Dustin suggested cheerfully, appearing non too bothered about the fact that Andy was grounded and wasn't supposed to leave the house.

Andy shook her head, "nah, he's hungover. He's always such a bitch when he's like that - he'd probably call my parents."

"Just come anyway!" Lucas scoffed, "what can Tyler do? Huh? He's with Mrs Byers, right?" Andy nodded hesitantly. "Then he has no way of knowing if you're home or not!" Andy bit her lip and considered Lucas's words. He had a point. Tyler was planning at staying at the Byers well into the night, he'd packed sleep clothes and everything! But she'd called him, he knew she wanted to go over to Mike's, he might come home early to make sure she'd listened to him.

"I'll go, but..." she hesitated, "I have to be quick. If Tyler goes home early, it'll only take him ten minutes to get from the Byers house back home, but since Will hasn't been found yet and Tyler promised to help Mrs Byers until he's found... he might hang around longer..." she was rambling now, and she knew it. Lucas and Dustin were glancing at each other, obviously not taking in a single word that left her mouth. "Nevermind," she sighed, "I'll be here."

Distantly, the bell rung. Andy held in a groan. Great, art class. Hefting her bag onto her shoulders, she began her angry march to her maths class, Dustin shouting and he followed her, "about your house...". Andy squeezed her eyes shut. *Only three more hours*, she reminded herself in a desperate attempt to not murder one of her

friends, *just three more hours to go.*

AN: So, would you guys prefer chapters set up more like this? Each episode broken up into two or more parts, or as one whole chapter? Please let me know in a review. I'd really appreciate it. If you'd prefer smaller chapters I can chop them up even more.

4. 3

The Wheeler House

Andy stood in Mike's bedroom, a smirk on her face as she gazed at Eleven. The quiet girl was sitting cross-legged on Mike's bed, Andy's clothes folded beside her as she was dressed in a pair of Mike's sweatpants and a jumper. She glanced over at the boy in question and raised an eyebrow.

"Wheeler," she called for his attention, "what's with the change in outfit?" Her tone grew teasing, "wanted to see a girl in your clothes?"

Mike's face quickly turned red and he began spluttering, waving his arms around and denying her claims. Dustin snickered, reaching a hand out. Andy slapped hers against his, smirk stretching into a smile as Dustin whispered, "good job, 'Dessa."

Lucas didn't react. Andy nervously studied him. Dustin quietened down, picking up on Andy's agitation. Reaching around her, he carefully closed the door. "Are you out of your mind?" He said, voice a near whisper as he glared at Mike.

"Just listen to me," Mike hurried, almost cutting Lucas off. Dustin and Andy exchanged a look.

"You are out of your mind!" Lucas squawked, beginning to gesture. Andy gulped, Lucas was a very expressive person, using strange hand movements and head shakes in moments of excitement or anger or nervousness. If Lucas was gesturing, he most definitely not happy with whatever it was Mike had planned.

Mike stared Lucas down, "she knows about Will!" Andy stood up straighter, all nerves and any other emotion gone. Eleven knew about Will? Had she told her? No... at least, not that she remembered. Maybe she'd said it in passing, but Andy was positive she never once said a thing to Eleven about Will. How did she know then?

"What do you mean she knows about Will?" Dustin asked, stepping forward, closer to Andy.

Mike exhaled, stomping to his small chest of drawers, where all the science fair trophies he, Will, Dustin and Lucas had worked hard to get (Andy could really care less about science) rested, and grabbed last years photo off of the table.

Andy looked down at the photo as Mike held it up. She remembered that day, well, not really. She'd been out of town and couldn't make it to the science fair to cheer the boys on, but that night Mrs Wheeler had invited her and her family over for dinner and the boys had spent the whole five hours they were there complaining about how they'd gotten third, Dustin had called her bad luck (*"It must've been you! You're the only variable that's changed in our lives since last year"*)

"What about moving to middle school?"

"Nah!") and they'd spent the rest of the year avoiding her around exam times and any important exams.

"She pointed at him, at his picture. She knew he was missing, I could tell." Mike told them. Andy frowned, her eyebrow quirking up.

"You could tell?" Lucas said in shared disbelief. Andy peered over at Eleven and huffed, stalking over to sit next to her on the bed.

"Do you know where Will is?" She whispered at her, pushing her head close to Eleven's. Eleven kept her head forward, cautiously gazing at Mike, who was trying to convince Lucas on his side. Dustin wandered closer to Andy and Eleven, but kept his distance. Eleven finally turned her head and looked Andy in the eyes, caramel eyes locked with sepia.

She nodded.

Andy gasped, hope flooding through her. "Do you know where he is?" Lucas stormed over, expression dark and voice demanding. Eleven leaned back, fear filling her face. Andy faced Lucas, understanding his motives.

"Lucas-" she started.

"Not now, Andy!" Lucas cut her off, never taking his eyes off of Eleven. Andy's eyes narrowed and her smile all but vanished. Fury

writhed through her body as she watched him clamp his hands on Eleven's shoulders and leaned in, shouting his question in her face.

"Lucas Sinclair! Stop!" Andy yelled, ripping him off the girl and glaring at him harder than she did anyone. "First, you do NOT get to write me off, okay?! I am an important member of this party, and I will be treated as such! Second, you never, NEVER touch a lady without her permission, especially," she pointed at Eleven behind her, "like that. Are we clear?!"

Lucas nodded, eyes narrowed in shame and anger. "I understand, but Will's more important."

"Don't interrogate her that way," Mike interjected, glaring, "you're scaring her!"

Lucas whirled around to face Mike, snapping, "she should be scared! If you know," he faced Eleven, who was now tightly held in Andy's arms, "where he is, tell us." Eleven didn't say anything, and leaned further back, into Andy's arms. At her silence, Lucas turned to face Mike a second time. "This is nuts," he yelled. "We have to take her to your mum."

Andy sat up straighter, remembering what Eleven had told her that morning. "Lucas," she began nervously, unwrapping her arms from around Eleven as she glanced at the boys, "I don't think that's a good idea."

"Eleven said telling any adult would put us in danger," Mike agreed. Andy shuffled forwards, gently pulling Lucas and Mike away from one another. Lucas huffed, but stepped back at Andy's warning stare. *No fighting today*, her eyes read.

"What kind of danger?" Dustin piped up, taking a step forward.

Lucas, however, was focused on something else. "Her name is Eleven?" Andy stomped on his foot, her gaze becoming more intense.

"Yes, Lucas, her name is Eleven. Let's focus on the fact that we could all die." She muttered at him.

"El for short," Mike informed, ignoring Dustin's question and Andy's

comment. Andy rolled her eyes and sighed. How did she not think of El as a nickname? Then again, names had never been her forte.

"Mike, what kind of danger?" Dustin repeated, more forcefully than before.

"Danger danger," Mike shouted back. Andy closed her eyes anxiously as Mike held a finger gun to Dustin's head. Lucas slapped his hand down when he moved to press it against his head.

"No, no no," he cried. Andy didn't say anything, she knew that Lucas was freaking out now, and was working it out the one way every human did; denying the problem. "We're going back to plan A. We're telling your mum." He shoved past Andy, almost pushing her into Dustin in his rush to reach the door. He'd just opened the door when it slammed shut. Andy shrieked and the drawers rattled against the walls. He tried again, but the same thing happened.

Andy's blood ran cold as she heard the faint click of the door locking... from the outside. She clutched Dustin in fright, slowly turning with the rest of the party to face Eleven. The small girl was glaring at them, now standing from the bed, a small strip of blood running down her nose. "No," she stated, honey eyes staring them down. Andy whimpered, sinking into herself.

Andy had left soon after Eleven's outburst. Her constant worry over Tyler returning home had won her over and the party had gently lowered her from Mike's window (she didn't want Nancy to see her - she'd just tattle to Tyler, or more likely Christopher), promising the party she'd return at around eight thirty, which in when the Wheeler's usually finished eating. Lucas and Dustin, flaunting their precious non-grounding, had called their parents to inform them they planned on staying for dinner.

Of course, the house was alive when she got there. "Ey, Addison!" Tommy H, one of Steve's - not Christopher's, *Steve's* - friends called when she walked in the door, waving a hand up at her. Andy furrowed her eyebrows. What was Tommy doing here?

"It's Andessa, you twit," Carol scolded, smirking at Andy from under

Tommy's arm, popping a piece of gum as she did so.

"Actually," Andy said, mocking Carol's drawl, "it's Andy. No one calls me Andessa except teachers and Tyler."

Steve smirked from where he was lying on the couch. "Yeah, Carol. Wouldn't want so sound like the resident homo, would ya?" Andy grit her teeth and rolled her eyes, storming past the living room.

"Where's Christopher?" She demanded as she passed, chucking her school bag on the ground along with her heels. "And why're *you* here?"

"Woah," Carol and Tommy called, Andy could picture the smirks on their dumb faces, "Little Miss Andy, you're being a real spitfire today."

Steve groaned, "cut it out guys, we're just here for Chris, not to irritate his younger sister."

"Yeah douchebags," Andy shouted over at them as she wandered towards the kitchen, ignoring Carol's mocking cat calls at her jabs and Tommy's boisterous laughter. She rummaged around in the fridge, searching for a light snack.

"Andy, what'd I tell you?" Christopher's voice came from behind her, and the hulking figure soon flitted into her vision. "Don't bug Tommy and Carol when they're over, they become bigger dicks than usual."

Andy glared at him, "what're they even doing here, Christopher? You know other people aren't supposed to be here when mum and dad aren't home."

Christopher smirked at her. "Like you actually follow that rule, right? I saw you and your friend this morning," Andy froze, "don't think I didn't." Andy gulped. Christopher must've read the fear on her face as a short laugh erupted from his mouth. "Don't worry, Miss May, you're secrets safe." He reached into the fridge and grabbed a six-pack of beers, "Steve's throwing a party tonight, with Miss Wheeler and her friend. As his best friend and wingman, I'm required to be present.

"Tyler's going out with the search party tonight, I'm gonna join him at

around nine." He paused and sent Andy a gentle smile, "We'll find Will, okay, May? We'll find him." He sent Andy a final smile before he turned around, Andy could hear him shooing Tommy, Carol and Steve from their living room, followed by the slamming of the front door.

Andy closed her eyes with a heavy sigh, feeling the tears welling up. She quickly stopped herself, remembering that she had options now. Eleven would help her find her best friend, and Will would come home, safe and sound. She supposed, also, she had Tyler and Christopher as well, always on the lookout for her, even around parties and debates. She was cut out of her by the phone ringing. She gave a startled scream in response. Who could possibly be calling her now?

She nervously approached the phone, answering with a hesitant "hello?"

"Hi Andessa, my darling!" Her mum's voice floated through the phone. Andy gave a nervous laugh. Of course it was just her mum, calling to check in on her.

Nothing to be afraid of, whatsoever.

Andy approached the basement door, knocking lightly. A few moments of shuffling later and Dustin opened the door, grinning widely at her.

"Don't worry," Mike was saying as she hung up her coat. "They won't tell anyone about you." Andy approached Eleven, newly dubbed 'El', who was sitting inside some kind of blanket fort, a tray of meatloaf in front of her. "They promise." Mike turned and sent them a harsh look while saying gently to El, "Right?" Andy nodded, gifting El with what she hoped was a friendly smirk, you could never be too sure.

"We never would've upset you if we knew you had superpowers," Dustin babbled, a small grin on his face. Andy's smirk grew wider at his words. It stretched into a full smile when Mike leaned back and hit Dustin on the legs in warning. "Ow!" He turned to Andy for support, only to deflate when he noticed her wide smile.

"What Dustin is trying to say is that they were just scared," Mike fixed, "earlier. That's all." Andy raised an eyebrow and sent Dustin a glance. She flicked her eyes between El and Mike. *You seeing this?* Dustin sent her a strange look that Andy replied with an eye roll. It wasn't *that* hard to communicate with your eyes. She and Jamie managed to get it down in two months flat! Then again, she and Jamie were trying to gossip without being caught by Jamie's friends or the teachers.

"We just wanted to find our friend," Lucas told El with a hint of nervousness in his voice, ignoring the attempted eye-conversation between Dustin and Andy.

El's eyebrows furrowed. "Friend'?"

"Oh this poor child!" Andy exclaimed dramatically, running forward to take El into her arms. She felt El stiffen for a moment, obviously not used to the affection strangling known as a hug. Mike and Lucas sighed at Andy's behavior behind her.

"Yeah, friend. Will?" Lucas repeated as Dustin rushed forward to try pull Andy off of the clearly uncomfortable Eleven.

Andy went easily, only to come back down when El questioned slowly, "What is 'friend'?"

Dustin rolled his eyes and backed off, deciding the fight wasn't worth it. Andy was clearly in a mood. "Is she serious?" Lucas asked Dustin, staring at El, and therefore, Andy, strangely. Dustin shrugged in response. "Um..." he began as Andy finally backed away, coming to stand beside Dustin once again. "A friend-"

"Is someone you'd do anything for." Mike cut in. Andy raised her eyebrow, smirking once again as she took in Mike's soft voice and gentle eyes.

"You lend them your cool stuff, like comic books and trading cards," Dustin smiled at her. Andy rolled her eyes at the explanation.

"Okay, that was the nerdiest thing to ever come out of your mouth in my presence, " she told Dustin sassily, "El, remember how I gave you

my clothes?" the girl nodded, "that was something a friend would do."

"And they never break a promise," Mike finished, talking so quickly he almost cut Andy off.

Lucas grinned, "especially when there's spit." Andy's nose wrinkled. Spit shakes were something she'd done with her brothers and sister when she was little, but a) that was family and b) she was a little girl. She and Jamie just did a slap shake; more painful, but it solidified a promise more than flimsy spit.

El's expression twisted in disgust, "spit?"

Lucas sighed, as if this was the biggest issue they'd come up with that night. "A spit swear means," he spat in his hand and shook Dustin's. Andy gagged quietly, "you never break your word. It's a bond."

"Come on," Dustin nudged her as he wiped his hand on his leg, even though his own expression was twisted in faint distaste. "it's not that disgusting."

Andy shook her head, a grimace on her face. "I don't even share water bottles with my brother. *Tyler* doesn't even share water bottles with his *twin* brother. Just... gross."

"That's super important," Mike spoke a bit louder to be heard over Andy and Dustin's bickering, "because friends... they tell each other things."

"Nobody ever tells *me* anything," Andy muttered under her breath.

Mike, not hearing Andy's ever growing list of complaints, continued, "things that parents don't know."

"Wait, you guys actually have secrets you're parents don't know?" She whispered to Dustin. It was kind of impossible to keep secret from her parents, Logan was known for his overemotional state if anything was kept from him and Denise *was* a lawyer.

Dustin subtly shook his head, "I don't like lying to my mum."

El glanced at them in the corner of her eye, a new expression resting

over her face and Andy knew, without a doubt, that El had placed the full trust in them... or at least, in Mike.

Andy handed Mike the small bag she'd brought with her. "Here," she mumbled, "there's a couple outfits in here. I can just drop by in the morning to help her get dressed. This way I don't have to worry about bringing new clothes every day." Mike took the bag and chucked it into the corner of the blanket fort. Andy winced as she watched it fly. It was a nice bag, it didn't deserve to be treated in such a way.

"Thanks, Andy," he grinned at her.

Andy nodded back with a small smirk. "Us girls need to stick together," she glanced at the wandering El, "goodness knows that the cows at school try to tear each other apart."

"The other girls fight?" Dustin interjected, a shocked look on his face.

Andy snorted. "Sure, but I think the blames on society. Always pushing perfection and jealousy onto girls. Mike, Lucas," she looked over at the two boys mentioned, "don't let Holly and Erica fall for it."

Mike opened his mouth to reply, when Lucas began walking forward, asking, "what's the weirdo doing?" Andy looked over at the D&D table, where El was sat, staring at the figures lined up. Andy felt a small rush when she noticed her figure. It certainly was thrilling playing D&D, even if she still struggled to understand it properly. They all rushed to stand around El.

"El?" Mike asked nervously. Andy's heartbeat picked up as El reached down, lifting a familiar figure towards her face. The wizard figure. Will.

"Will," she confirmed. The room was spinning, tilting on its axis as Andy took in what El was saying. Was she about to...?

"Superpowers," Dustin breathed. Lucas peered at Dustin and shook his head. Andy reached out and grabbed Dustin's hand in her own, nerves flourishing through her.

Mike took the seat beside El, carefully studying her face. "Did you see him? On Mirkwood?" he questioned. El stared down at the board before swiping an arm over it, wiping it clean and flipping the board over. Andy's heart almost stopped as El placed Will's figurine on top of the flipped world. What did that mean? Was Will dead? No, no he couldn't be. But what else could the other side mean? "I don't understand." Mike told El, fearfully looking down at the board.

"Hiding," El told them. Andy whimpered, shuffling closer to Dustin.

Mike's tone became more urgent, "Will is hiding?" Andy held in a sob as El nodded. "From the bad men?" Mike asked, his hand coming up to grab onto Andy's wrist, but his eyes never left El. Andy linked her hand onto Mike's wrist, needing something to stabilize her. Lucas and Dustin exchanged a look as El shook her head, her forehead creasing. "Then from who?"

Andy's other hand left Dustin's to raise to her mouth when El slammed down the figure of the Demogorgon. Will's voice rushed through her head, *"Fireball!" "Does a seven count?" "Did Mike see it? Then it doesn't count."* Mike leaned back, his hold on Andy's arm tightening. Andy didn't complain because the slight pinch was calming her, keeping her from breaking down. His eyes trailed over his friends. Dustin released a loud sigh.

Dustin rode Andy home that night. It wasn't safe to leave her alone, she'd probably crash her bike and sit there for who knows how long. Mike'd wanted her to stay at his place, at least until she'd sorted everything out and calmed down, but it was almost nine, and Andy knew Tyler and Christopher would probably already be there, waiting for her.

Dustin and Lucas were supposed to be sleeping over, but Dustin claimed he'd left something at his house and followed behind Andy, even walking her up to the door. "Dustin, thank you, but I was fine to ride home," Andy told him, even as her lip trembled and her voice came out all squeaky.

Dustin shook his head. "That's bullshit, 'Dessa, and you know it. We all know how you are when you have your attacks." Andy opened her

mouth, and Dustin raised a hand to tell her to stop. "I know, we all know that you like to be alone to sort things out, but Andy, this one's more serious. It's the worse I've ever seen you, so I'm gonna let you sort it out by yourself, but there was no way you were okay to ride here." He suddenly grinned, "it's like looking after a drunk." Andy snorted and unlocked the front door.

"Hey, Dustin," she called as the boy began to leave. He turned to face her, tilting his head. "Thank you," she sent him a large grin, tears beginning to cascade down her face. He sent her a toothless smile and began on his way.

Andy closed the door, ready to deal with her struggles the way her father taught her to; cry and eat a load of ice-cream.

AN: I'm sorry this chapters as short as it is, however, it is a continuation of episode two and I'd prefer to keep each episode separate so that episodes two and three aren't combined. I afraid the next chapter will be another short one, as episode three wasn't too focused on anything I could include Andy in, except for the end really. Quick question; as someone brought to my attention, the topic of romance. Yay or nay? It's not something I've really thought of, but you guys are the readers, it's you this story is for, so if you request it, I deliver. This story is on Quotev under the same name with the amazing author (me) LittleDreamer because I forgot to mention that.

Thank you to iAmCC and candy95 for reviewing, candy95, Nobody Goes Here and avatarange for following and avatarange, Phaosphoros and machomattthew29350 for following. I really appreciate it.

5. 4

WARNING: THIS STORY CONTAINS CANON-TYPICAL AND NON-CANON-TYPICAL SWEARING. THE 'F' WORD IS USED A RECORDED ONE TIME THIS CHAPTER.

Fun Fact: It is very fun to listen to listen to Disney villain songs while writing. They're all very sassy and make me feel like I could manipulate the lord of the universe, confidently, while sipping on a fancy mocktail (I cannot drink yet, so no cocktails for me) and wearing a fancy gown with a fur shawl.

AN: So... hi? I'm so sorry for disappearing off the face of the earth, but I've been very busy with school and whatnot - year 10 is no joke.

I managed to get a 40% on one of my tests so my parents put me on lock down, no writing, reading or anything until I'd bettered my grade. I'm still getting there, but I managed to sneak write this under their noses and I should be back soon with a whole new chapter as I have a five day weekend coming up soon for Easter and I'm un-grounded for that.

Also, this chapter is kind of short because of the fact I've been sneakily writing it, so I apologise for that too.

Also also, something I should've mentioned when I first posted this story, a friend of a friend has a sort of dead account that they kindly lent me to post this story as 'they won't be using it any more' so a huge shout out to GirlyGirlAlert, which I should of said when this story first went up on this site.

Sorry for the super long Author's Note, back to the story!

She was in a familiar place. A living room of some sort. She sniffled, nose running as she huddled herself closer to the wall. A tattered and torn blanket was pulled over her shoulders in a desperate attempt to find warmth. It was, of course, a futile attempt, the blanket was frozen solid. Andy was afraid that if she were to even touch the blanket, it would

crumble in her grasp.

She shivered, whimpering softly as a shadow passed her vision. Her eyes were stinging, begging her to close them, just for a minute. She resisted, although she was unsure as to why. Exhaustion was crawling through her veins, limbs numb and asleep. She bit her lip and slapped her leg.

Nothing. She couldn't feel it at all.

Tears dripped down her face steadily, breaths coming out in clouds of air in front of her. Her eyelids began to drop and she slowly, gently, began to lay her head on the wall behind her. She'd only just began to allow her eyelids to fall when that same, strange, ominous clicking from the night before infiltrated the room.

She snapped to attention, beginning to claw her way towards a section of the wall. She dug and shoved things out of the way, unsure of what she was doing. Her body moved like muscle memory, pulling open a small section of the wall, just small enough to fit her into it. She crawled into the space, sitting with her knees drawn to her chest. She swung the door closed and sat, eyes clenched shut, but far too afraid to drift asleep.

She didn't know what was coming, but she knew she needed to fear it.

Andy awoke that morning dressed in the remains of yesterdays outfit, leftover ice cream cartons and spoons peeked at her from the coffee table of her bedroom. Shakily, she raised a hand to her face, shocked, yet somehow unsurprised at the same time, to feel tears coating her cheeks.

She picked her glasses off of the table, glancing over at the clock as she did so. Upon seeing the time, she jumped off of the couch, mysterious dream pushed to the back of her thoughts. She hadn't overslept, thank goodness, but any later and she definitely would've done. She'd always been lucky when it gets to waking up. Sure, she was a grumpy little rascal who'd probably try to bite someone's fingers if they tried to get near her in the mornings, but she never slept in.

She dashed around her room, stumbling from her shower to her

closet, tear tracks still coating her cheeks, and finally into the kitchen. She froze when she noticed its empty state, the sparkling benches showing Patricia's, already completed, hard work. James wasn't running around as he made breakfast, Patricia wasn't sitting at the counter, writing letters to one of her boyfriends, Tyler wasn't grabbing plates or helping James and Christopher wasn't sitting there nursing a headache from a hangover.

The kitchen was empty.

"Hello?" She called out nervously. Her voice echoed back at her, but there was no other sound. "Tyler? Christopher? James? Patricia?" No response. Andy groaned, throwing her head back. It seemed she was riding again. If she was wrong, and it turned out Tyler was asleep and Christopher was pulling a prank on her by making her break her grounding rules then she'd murder them. She'd even enlist the help of the telekinetic girl they'd found.

She glanced helplessly around the kitchen. She had no idea how to cook anything. Sure, she could make a sandwich and Eggos, but that was the extent of her cooking skills. After all, her mother refused etiquette classes until her thirteenth birthday. Huffing, Andy pulled the Eggos box from the freezer. She wasn't really a fan of waffles, but it'd do. She glanced over at the clock and hissed. Without sitting down to eat breakfast with Tyler and Christopher, a huge chunk of her schedule was gone, and she still had another hour before she had to leave.

She sat at the kitchen counter, eyebrows furrowed in an angry as halfheartedly chewed on her waffles. She was going to stop by Mike's this morning and help El into the outfit she'd put together for her; there was certainly no way Mike would know what to do. How was she supposed to go to school? Should she ride her bikWie and break her grounding? Where was everyone anyway?

Beep! Beep!

A car horn echoed from outside her house. Andy's eyebrows furrowed. Nobody knew where her house was, nobody that had anything to do with her anyway. Heck, she'd only just shown her friends where her house was barely two days ago! Cautiously, she

opened the front door, peaking out.

"Hey, Andy!" Jamie shouted, leaning out the front window of a blue Audi Quattro. "Tyler called, we're giving you a lift." Jamie had a large grin plastered on her face, blonde hair tucked neatly into a bun Andy was sure her mum had done, a few stray hairs flying in the strong wind. Jamie was dressed neatly and gorgeously as always, sleeves of a flared, tight, orange shirt flowing out the window, a tight, pencil skirt barely visible. Andy grinned, taking her mind off of Mike and Eleven and helping save Will (although that last thought didn't stray too far). She grabbed her bag from its spot on the floor and pulled on her now-a-tiny-bit-more clean converse.

She stepped fully outside and made her way towards the car. Jamie jokingly wolf-whistled as she approached. "Nice jumper," she teased, "where'd you get it?"

Andy blushed, looking down at her embarrassing Hawking Middle AV Club jumper. She was dressed lazily that day, having thrown the jumper in question and a pair of old jeans on. "Shut up," she replied, knowing Jamie was saying it all in jest, "when my dad found out Mike, Will, Dustin and Lucas had joined the AV Club, he automatically assumed I'd join and made me one." She climbed into the backseat, Jamie jumping over the glovebox to join her, almost kicking her mum with her small Mary Jane heels.

"Jayden!" Mrs Kalum reprimanded lightly.

"I wasn't kidding though," Jamie beamed, ignoring her mum. "I need to confirm my move to the Nerd Side."

Andy raised an eyebrow at her friend, "you using a Star Wars reference is *enough* confirmation." Jamie pouted at her, blue eyes wide.

A loud chuckle came from the front seat and the familiar forest eyes belonging to Mrs Kalum twinkled at her through the rearview mirror. "Hello, Andessa, it's nice to see you're still keeping Jamie in line," she sent her daughter a look, angry for being kicked and ignored. Mrs Kalum was always a well-dressed woman, constantly clad in modern and classy fashion that left gossipers angry and envious. She'd taught

Jamie her way of dress and managed to reduce her age by twenty years with her sense of style.

Jamie groaned beside her. Andy grinned, "you bet, Mrs Kalum. Someone's gotta watch over James here." Andy reached up and patted Jamie's hair, smirking when the blonde let out a loud whine.

"Stop ganging up on me!" Jamie cried, slapping Andy's hand away. Andy grinned, falling back against the seat as the car finally pulled away, taking its occupants to the hell that was Middle School.

"Where were you this morning?" Mike interrogated as Andy shut her locker. Andy jumped with a squeal, not expecting him. "We ended up not dressing El," Mike continued, following Andy as she got a drink from the drink fountain.

"Yeah, what the hell, Andy?" Lucas piped up as he appeared on her other side. "We couldn't dress a girl and the dress you packed was impossible to figure out."

Andy rolled her eyes. "Tyler and Christopher weren't home this morning," she explained, "I think Christopher got drunk again last night or stayed over at Steve's."

"I keep forgetting Christopher's friends with Harrington," Dustin murmured, somehow appearing behind her as the Party began the walk to their first class. "He seems too cool to hang out with such a douche."

"Tyler was with the search-party," Andy ignored Dustin, "so he's probably still with Mrs Byers. He called for someone to pick me up this morning and take me to school," she sighed. "I got here an *hour* early. Luckily, Miss Peters opened the library early and let me study. So," she spun around to face them, a smirk dancing across her face, "what's the plan?"

The boys took a step back, not expecting her enthusiasm. "Wait, what?" Lucas stammered, "what about your grounding?"

Andy faced forwards and continued to lead the way to the maths

room, voice fast and quiet, "I can't really be bothered with my stupid grounding right now. I've already lost two nights to it and besides, Will's more important. Tyler's not going to be home, and Christopher's grounded as well, but he's still going out, so why can't I? So," she came to a stop just outside the door, and repeated, "what's the plan?"

Mike was the first to speak, Lucas and Dustin clearly too shocked by Andy's uncharacteristic rule-breaking. She was a Fisher, after all, everyone knew most Fishers, much like Tyler, always stuck to rules. What would you expect with a strict lawyer and a pushy doctor for parents? Christopher and Tara were, of course, the exception. "Well, we're gonna tell our parents that we have AV Club after school today, and then we're gonna meet El at the power lines outside my house." Andy nodded, taking the plan in.

"Miss Fisher, Mr Wheeler, Mr Henderson, Mr Sinclair," the screeching tone of Mr Lauter, or Mr Loner as the students called him, caught their attention, "if you'd please stop gossiping like a group of old ladies and please get into my classroom." Andy hurriedly ducked unto Mr Loner's arm and dashed to her seat, face slowly turning red.

"We'll talk during lunch," she whispered to Dustin as he passed. Dustin nodded and nudged Lucas, most likely to play a game of telephone and repeat Andy's message. Andy slowly, painfully, opened her book, eyes on Mr Loner.

"Algorithms!" He started. Andy groaned, subtly slamming her head on her desk. Well, this would be a *fun* lesson.

By lunch, Andy was officially done with the world. She laid head on her almost empty tray, practically dead. She could sense Jamie's worried eyes on her, honing in on her from across the cafeteria. Lucas, Mike and Dustin ate quietly, no arguments or geeky comments surrounding the table for once.

She tilted her head to the side, watching the boys heads snap back to their food. She quickly scanned the cafeteria. It wasn't long before her eyes met Jamie's. Unlike the boys, Jamie didn't falter in her staring. Jennifer Hayes, one of Jamie's friends, chatted on, not

noticing the blonde's complete lack of interest. Jamie scrunched her forehead, eyes worried.

'What's wrong?'

Andy shook her head. *'Nothing.'*

See Dustin, she couldn't help but think, *it's not that hard.*

Jamie raised her eyebrows. *'Really?'*

Andy nodded, sending her a small smirk. *'Yeah.'* Jamie nodded, eyes still worried, but turned to face Jennifer, excitedly responding to whatever the other blonde was saying.

"So," Andy said aloud, breaking the party's staring contest with their food, "I'm getting a ride home today, so I'll be home super early. I guess I'll meet you at Mirkwood." She peered up at Mike, "she can find him, right? Find Will?"

Mike met her gaze with even eyes and slowly nodded. "I... I think so. I trust her." Lucas snorted but otherwise didn't comment. Andy stared Mike down, studying him. It wasn't that she didn't trust Mike's judgement, it was just she didn't trust Mike's judgement. No offence to Mike, but Andy could tell he had some kind of infatuation for this girl, for El, and she wasn't sure if this was blind trust placed by a lovesick boy or actual belief that she could help them.

"Okay," she breathed, "I trust you." A large grin slowly crept onto Mike's face, "but!" Andy snapped, "if she doesn't come through, then I'm looking for Will on my own, you got that, Wheeler?!" Lucas hummed approvingly beside her. Mike stared her in the eyes, and nodded, his lips pursed in seriousness.

Andy nodded in return, turning her eyes back to her food. "Good."

Dustin cleared his throat, speaking up for the first time in a while. "Dessa," Andy peered at him curiously, "we're gonna go looking for some rocks for Lucas' wrist rocket." He glanced over at her nervously, "are you going to join us?" Andy leaned back in her seat and nodded. Jamie didn't need her today, they'd already studied, besides, if they were going to encounter something terrible, it would be better if she

helped the boys.

They quickly finished their food and rushed outside, picking up rocks and examining them in extreme detail. "How about this one?" Mike asked, holding a rock up to Dustin.

Dustin barely looked at it before replying, "too big for the sling." Andy sighed and rolled her eyes, reaching down to grab a fairly smooth rock off the ground. She wrinkled her nose at the sight of all the dirt under her nail. As a nail biter, getting dirt under the nails was one of the most disgusting things to happen. She'd have to sanitise and wash her hands thoroughly before she could even think about placing her hands near her mouth.

"So do you think Eleven was born with her powers," Dustin began, "like the X-Men, or do you think she acquired them, like... like Green Lantern?"

"I think," Andy sharply stated, "that you should focus on finding a good rock!"

Dustin back up, eyebrows raised as he held his arms up in surrender. "Okay, okay, geez."

Lucas turned to face them, "besides, she's not a superhero. She's a weirdo."

Andy glared at him. "Lucas!" she hissed, eyes warning.

"Why does that matter?" Mike interjected, bringing everyone's attention to him. "The X-Men are weirdos." Andy rolled her eyes, reaching down to pick up another rock. It seemed she was right, Mike was crushing on El, and he was crushing hard.

Lucas seemed to follow Andy's train of thought as he stepped forward, challenging, "if you love her so much, why don't you marry her?"

"What are you talking about?" Disbelief coloured Mike's voice.

Andy snorted, drawing the Party's attention. "Com'on, Mike, it's obvious." She stood up, handing the rock to Dustin absentmindedly,

"anyone with eyes and a brain could see you hold an interest for our resident telekinetic."

"Yeah, Mike," Lucas jumped in, "you look at her all like, 'Hi El!'" Andy coughed a laugh as Lucas went into falsetto, a weak impression of Mike, pressing his hands to his chest as he made lovestruck eyes towards an extremely irritated Mike, "'El! El! El! I love you so much! Would you marry me?'" Andy leaned against Dustin as she let loose a series of pig-snort laughs.

"Shut up, Lucas!" Mike spat, pushing Lucas away. He shot a grinning Dustin and a laughing Andy a dark look, "you too Andy."

"Yeah," Andy froze at hearing the deeper voice that did not belong in their group, "shut up Lucas, Homeschool." Troy stalked towards them. "What are you losers doing back here?" Andy reached up and gripped her glasses reflexively.

"Probably looking for their missing friend," James taunted. Andy's eyes turned dark as she began to glare hatefully at the two in front of her.

"Shut up, James!" Andy stepped forward.

"That's not funny," Dustin pulled her back, behind him, "it's serious, he's in danger."

"I hate to break it to you, Toothless, but he's not in danger," Troy smirked, "he's dead. That's what my dad says."

"Well your dad's a bitch-ass liar," Andy shoved her way forward once again, forgetting all of her own safety as she stalked towards Troy. "Just you see, you ignorant little fuck. Will's gonna come home, safe and sound, and you're gonna get your weak ass blown out of the water." Troy glared at her, before reaching out and grabbing her glasses off of her face.

"Agh!" Andy cried. The world was murky as if seeing everything through dirty water. She could hear the boys crying out, and faintly see the shape of Troy, stomping on something. Her heart sunk to her feet and her head began ringing. Her glasses. Troy was destroying her

glasses.

"Come on," Mike's warm voice said, and a blurry outline appeared a bit beside her. "Let's just go. Ignore them, Andy." Together, the three boys began to lead Andy back towards the school. Andy gave a small scream of surprise as she and Mike suddenly toppled over as her foot hooked onto, what she guessed to be, Troy's leg.

"Troy, now you just being cruel," Dustin shouted. "She can't see, why'd you do that."

"Watch where you're going, Frogface," Troy sneered, "you just took Homeschool down with you."

"You alright?" Dustin asked them worriedly as they pulled Mike and Andy to their feet.

"Yeah," Mike breathed.

"I'm okay," Andy whimpered, "Jamie Kalum has a spare pair of my glasses." She knew without a doubt that Dustin, Lucas and Mike were probably sharing looks of confusion over her head, after all, nobody was really aware of Andy, a nerd by association, and Jamie's, the most popular girl in their entire grade, and most likely school, friendship.

"Hey," Dustin called. Andy turned her head in his direction, taking in the smooch that was supposed to be his curls. He held a rock over Andy, in Mike's direction. "How about this one?"

Mike gave a small chuckle, and a smirk grew on Andy's face. "Yeah."

"Yeah?" Dustin laughed.

"Yeah, this is it." Mike passed the rock onto Lucas.

Andy couldn't help the laugh that escaped her lips as Lucas hummed out a, "oh yeah. Yeah, this is the monster killer!" Mike began laughing as well, and the three boys gently led Andy into the school.

"Nate, Karen and I went to meet Mrs Byers today," Mrs Kalum told

her and Jamie when they piled into the car. Jamie had a secure arm around her, a protective gleam in her eyes. She'd been with Andy all day since the boys had asked for Andy's spare glasses during lunch. It'd certainly garnered some strange looks and started a rumour or ten.

"Hmm?" Jamie hummed, fussing over Andy. Mrs Kalum glanced back at the two, taking note of the tear tracks down Andy's face and the dark glare on her daughters that reflected back to her.

"Yes," she continued hesitantly, "Tyler was still there, I think he's going to be there until late tonight."

"Really?" Jamie asked. It was obvious to the inexperienced mother that neither she nor Andy were engaged in the conversation

"Hmm..." Mrs Kalum began to pull out of the parking lot, eyes on Andy. "Andy, darling, perhaps it's best you come to our house tonight... I don't feel comfortable leaving you alone with just Christopher."

"No thank you, Mrs Kalum," Andy spoke for the first time since lunch, voice croaking a bit. "I'd prefer to be home."

Mrs Kalum eyed her. "If you're sure..."

"Mum, leave it!" Jamie suddenly snapped, glaring at her mum fiercely.

Mrs Kalum's eyes turned to stone. "Jayden Kalum, if you do not want a grounding yourself, you will watch your tone."

"No!"

"Jayden! I'm warning you!"

"Well, I'll just call child protection services. At least then they'd leave me with a family better than you!"

"Jayden!" Both Mrs Kalum and Andy snapped at the same time, Andy swerving her head up to glare at her friend. Jamie glanced down at her friend and grimaced, laying her head on Andy's as she wrapped

her arms around her.

"We're here, Andy," Mrs Kalum pulled to a stop outside Andy's house. "I believe you will not be seeing Jamie at school tomorrow. She'll be grounded."

Andy bit her lip and nodded, clambering out of the car. She watched her friend drive off before sprinting into her house.

She had a little over an hour before the boys would arrive and she needed to get ready.

"Andy!"

"Dessa!"

Andy rushed out the back door, glaring at the Party. "Are you insane? What if my brothers had been home? They would've gone-" she abruptly cut herself off as she spied the familiar figure of Eleven huddled behind Mike on his bike. "Hey El!" She smiled at the other girl. El smiled back hesitantly, only making Andy's smile wider. "I told you, nerds, I'll meet you at Mirkwood!"

"But it takes you forever!" Mike argued, "we only have a few hours, and we couldn't spend half of it waiting for you." Andy huffed. Mike was right, which *sucked*. It was always like a kick to the gut whenever one of the Party was right and she was wrong. Actually, it was like a kick to the gut when *anyone* was right and she was wrong.

"Whatever!" Andy threw her hands up in the air, glaring furiously at them. "Let me grab my bag."

"Why do you need a bag?" Dustin asked, giving her a look. Andy didn't say anything and trailed her eyes slowly over the boy's bags before raising an eyebrow in Dustin's direction. He nodded, cheeks flaming. She ran inside, pulling her bag off of the kitchen counter as she did. She tugged her pike out of the garage and sprinted around to where the boys were.

"Well then, let's go."

Andy watched, amusement colouring her features, a smirk on her face, as El and Mike walked ahead, chatting. They had started pushing their bikes a few minutes ago when the small paved trail turned to leaves and dirt. She snickered as she spied El sending Mike a small smile. "Just you watch, boys," she murmured to Lucas and Dustin, "they're going to fall hard and fast."

Lucas snorted, "as if they already haven't."

"Yeah," Dustin agreed, "it's kinda gross. But would it really be that out there if Mike was the first to get a girlfriend?"

"What do you mean get one?" Andy inquired, her signature 'innocent' look appearing, "I thought he already had one." Lucas huffed a laugh and reached over to high-five her. Dustin smiled.

"I don't know, Dustin," Lucas began after a moment of silence passed between them, "I always thought Will would get together with Andy."

Andy froze, the boys continuing in front of her. "Hm.. yeah, I guess I thought that too," Dustin hummed.

"Woah, woah, woah, what?!" Andy snapped, jogging to catch up, surprisingly not garnering El and Mike's attention. "Come on, guys, I don't like Will that way."

Dustin scoffed, "as if Andy, we all know you do." For once, however, he didn't elaborate.

"Yeah," Lucas picked up, "you've always had a crush on him. It's kinda obvious, even to Will."

"Guys, I'm not kidding," she looked at them seriously, "I don't like Will like that. He's my best friend, and I'd probably sooner sacrifice you to the devil before I let anything happen to him, but I don't like Will that way. It's almost like liking your brother." She grimaced at the very thought. The two sent her a look, but didn't say anything to her.

The rest of the walk was in silence. Nerves began to grow in her gut as Andy began recognising the way to Will's house. Doubts began to fill her as she watched for any difference in their direction. The sky

darkened above them and their lights switched on. All too soon, they approached the Byer's house.

Andy closed her eyes, frustration filling her. Mike had promised. "What are we doing here?" Lucas snapped as they chucked their bikes aside.

Mike huffed, "she said he's hiding here."

"Mike," Andy almost whispered, anger steadily rising within her.

"Um, no!" Lucas glared.

"I swear, if we walked all the way out here for nothing-" Dustin began to complain.

"That's exactly what we did!" Lucas interjected.

Andy stepped forward. "Mike, you promised me we could trust her to find Will."

Mike raised his hands, "we can!"

"Obviously not!" Andy noticed El wincing at Andy's shout, but couldn't find it in her to care. "She has not once given us proof she knows where he is! And tonight she just sent us on a wild goose chase!"

Mike stepped towards Andy, anger on his face, "I thought you trusted her."

"I did." Andy glared.

"Come on, guys." Dustin intervened. "Let's not fight."

Mike was the first to back down. He turned to face El, asking sternly, "why did you bring us here?"

El looked shocked and confused, stammering as she tried to find an answer. "Mike, don't waste your time with her," Lucas said.

"What do you want to do then?" Mike snapped back, facing his friend.

Andy shuffled towards Dustin, the taller boy wrapping his arms around her shoulders in comfort. She tilted her head in confusion as red and blue flashing lights slowly came towards them. She nudged Dustin and pointed toward them.

"Call the cops like we should've done yesterday!"

"Hey," Dustin said softly.

He was ignored, however, as Mike continued their argument, "we are not calling the cops."

"Hey guys!" Dustin slowly walked forward, keeping Andy safe under his arm. Andy's anger slowly began to drain out and she began to close herself closer to her friend.

"What other choice do we have?" Lucas prattled on behind them.

"Guys!" Dustin shouted, finally getting their attention. Andy whimpered as the sirens wailing got louder. An ambulance. She shoved herself out of Dustin's grip and ran towards her bike, only one thing on her mind.

"Will..." Mike whispered. Andy froze, tears filling her eyes for the who-knows-how-many-th time. She had always been a crier, too emotionally invested in things. It was one of the traits she and her dad shared, the only trait she shared with Tyler, really. The movement of her friends snapped her back into action and Andy shot off like a bullet, drawing upon strength she didn't know she had to keep up with the ambulance. Adrenaline pumped through her, her flight reflex in overdrive as she, literally, flew after the ambulance [AN: I feel like I should clarify that I know this is not how adrenaline, but Andy doesn't know that, so she is saying it's adrenaline] .

When they reached the quarry, Andy skidded to a stop, falling to the ground in her efforts. Tripping over herself, Andy ran forward and hid behind an ambulance car, tears slowly falling down her face. Distantly, she could feel Mike towering behind her. She couldn't see over the crowd of police officers, but once chief Hopper moved, Andy saw the signature orange jacket Will had been wearing the day he'd

gone missing.

"No." Andy murmured, falling to her knees.

"It's not Will," Mike said behind her. "It can't be."

Lucas's breath became laboured. "It's Will. It's really Will." Dustin came forward, wrapping his arms around Andy and gently helping her off the floor. Andy sobbed, turning and hugging him. She could hear Mike back up behind her, and El following behind him.

"Mike." She said.

"Mike'? 'Mike' what?" Mike snapped. "You were supposed to help us find him alive. You said he was alive! Why did you lie to us?" Andy sniffled, trying to contain her sobs. It seemed, when it came to trauma, that she and Mike were opposites. "What's wrong with you? What is wrong with you?"

"Mike..." El whimpered. Andy turned her head, watching as the girl flinched. Mike sent her a hateful look and stalked towards his bike.

Lucas stepped forward. "Mike, come on, don't do this man. Mike..."

"Mike, where are you going?" Dustin called, not letting his grip on Andy go. His voice, like Lucas's, betrayed the tears that were desperately trying to be kept in. "Mike!"

He ignored them, picking up his bike and pedaling away. Andy ripped herself out of Dustin's grasp and ran towards Will. Her lungs burned, her legs shook. Tears trickled down her face as she sprinted towards the body.

Her best friend.

Her brother.

Dead.

6. 5

WARNING: This chapter is both short and sad and could possibly be triggering to some people. I myself have never experienced grief, but I have experienced depression and suicidal thoughts before, so that is what I used to write this chapter. I would suggest not reading anything with the * before them if any of this could be triggering for you. If you think it could be triggering, but want to read anyway, I'd suggest you read it with a friend near by, or read it in the living room or where ever other people are. There is also mentions of a panic attack in this chapter, so please be cautious**

Andy sat in bed, staring over at the pristine white wall She wasn't sure how much time had passed since she'd been brought home. It could've been minutes, hours, even seconds. Days could've gone by and she wouldn't even remember it.

She couldn't remember anything about that night. It'd happened in a rush. She'd sprinted forward, desperately trying to reach him, only to collapse on the ground as her legs gave away. She'd never cursed her lack of fitness the way she had that moment. She could remember a foggy figure standing above her, picking her up and placing her into the car. She remembered Tyler, her bothers warm embrace as someone drove them home, his tears dripping onto her hair and her own staining his clothes. She remembered being placed on her bed after hobbling up the stairs, but she couldn't remember how she'd gotten there, where she'd been. She didn't remember being placed on her bed and she didn't remember the drive to the Byers house, where Mrs Byers, Tyler and Jonathan were stood, her brother and her best friend's - her dead best friend's mother - in the middle of a panic attack.

The door slowly began to creep open, the sound of slow footsteps approaching her bed. "I called the school," Tyler told her, kneeling beside the bed. Andy didn't move, frozen in place with her eyes on the wall. "I called mum and dad as well... They're coming home." Andy still didn't move or give any acknowledgement towards her

brother. "I-" Tyler's voice cracked, and the oldest son looked away from the youngest daughter, gathering himself, "I'm going to have to leave for a while." He sniffled, the loud sound breaking the pause that'd taken over the bedroom. "Andy... Christopher's gone missing, an-and-" Tyler cut himself off, a loud sob echoing from his direction. Andy blinked but didn't respond.

"No one's seen him in two days, Andy," Tyler's voice had softened to a murmur, "Two whole days. He just... disappeared. We're going looking for him..." he paused, clearly waiting for his sister to speak. Andy remained silent. Unmoving. "You-you stay here." Tyler stuttered finally, before pulling himself up off of the floor and slowly backing out of the room.

Andy remained quiet. Her eyes slowly began to close and she slowly allowed herself to fall back on her bed.

*****-START**

Will and Christopher... both gone. Both missing from her life. What could she do without them? Nothing.

She pressed her palms into her eyes, a sob escaping her lips. She'd failed them.

It was all her fault.

She'd never before wondered what it'd be like to die young. Never once questioned the possibility that she would live until she was old and grey. Never even had the thought that something or someone could put an end to that fantasy. Never thought she could suffer the fate of so many.

Of course, she couldn't, she was Andessa Fisher, daughter of the strongest people she knew and sister of the most overprotective brothers in existence. But she was alone now, yearning for the comfort of her best friend and the warm embrace of her brother. If she could only be reunited with them in death, would that make everything better? She wasn't sure. She knew what Tyler would say if she told him her thoughts, so she didn't bother. Because she knew that while Tyler would deny it, he'd be thing the same thing. It was

his twin missing after all.

***-END

She was sat in the living room, huddled under a blanket, Star Wars playing on the television screen. One of Will's favourite movie. In her hands, she clutched Christopher's basketball jersey, tears trailing down onto the material. She wasn't quite sure how she ended up there, how Christopher's jersey ended up in her hands or Star Wars on the TV, but she was grateful for it. The constant sound of clashing lightsabers, people talking to one another furiously and interacting with one another.

Maybe I should've gone to school today, she wondered, perhaps the social setting would be good for her. The very moment that thought crossed her mind, a faint blaring sound echoed from her bag. Her walkie-talkie. Andy lunged to her bag, throwing her blanket on the floor.

"Andy, it's me, Lucas," the voice echoed from her bag. "I know you probably don't want to talk to us or anything like that, but Mike's called us out to his place. Something about Will." Shakily, Andy pulled the old walkie-talkie out of her bag, holding it in front of her face. Her friend's voice easily drowned out the sound of Luke's training, the familiar buzz all she could focus on.

If she was being honest, she didn't want to face her friends, didn't want to see them handling their grief differently to her. But maybe it would be good for her. Her dad had always said that social interaction was the key to a healthy mind. Taking a deep breath, Andy pressed down on the lever, saying, "I'll be there in ten."

The sun shined down on her as she pulled up at the Wheeler's. Dustin was waiting by the door, a clump of bikes surrounding him. "Hey 'Dessa," he greeted weakly. Andy didn't respond, staring him down. The red circles and bags around her brown eyes spoke for themselves, the brunette didn't need to say anything. Dustin looked down, an aura of depression surrounding them both.

"Why'd Mike call us here?" Andy asked softly, voice cracking and

rasping as she did.

Dustin jerked, surprised. "I don't know," he responded, "Lucas said Mike said something about Will."

Andy's eyes narrowed. "I already said my opinion on trusting Mike about Will," she practically growled. "He's lead us astray and I don't think I trust him anymore."

Dustin quickly nodded. "Yeah, I know, but maybe we should give him one last chance." Andy just glared. "Come on, 'Dessa, for Will."

"Fine." Andy stormed into the house, dropping down beside Lucas with the faint banging of Dustin coming down the stairs behind her. "What is it, dipshit?" She spat at Mike. "Show us this evidence you have, then I'm going home, okay?!"

Mike nodded fearfully and gestured to El, who gazed at Andy with scared, wide eyes. "El, show them what you showed me, please." El sat and fiddled with the walkie-talkie for several moments, before the sound of someone whimpering came out through the device. Andy's heart clenched and her eyes welled up. It was true, yes, that Will often whimpered more than cried or screamed when he was frightened, but Will was dead. And Mike was messing with her mind again.

It was only Dustin's hand on her knee that kept her from standing up and wrenching the device out of El's hands, for how dare they try to trick her like this. "We keep losing the signal, but you heard it, right?" Mike asked, eyes skipping over Andy's glare.

"Yeah," Lucas grabbed Andy's hand, "I heard a baby."

"What?" Mike questioned, tilting his head in confusion.

Andy grit her teeth. "Mike, it's obvious that the frequencies picked up a baby monitor or something," she spat, glaring hatefully. "I can't believe you called me here for this shit." Dustin quickly reached over and gripped her other hand, squeezing it slightly in warning as Lucas did the same on her other hand.

"It's probably the Blackburns' next door," Lucas told Mike in a soft

tone, obviously more sympathetic than Andy.

"Uh, did that sound like a baby to you?" Mike retorted sassily.

"Uh, yes" Andy shot back hatefully.

Mike ignored her, still trying to convince Lucas. "That was Will!" Andy growled. "Lucas, you don't understand. He spoke last night. Words! He was singing that weird song he loves," Andy squeezed her eyes shut, trying to hold the tears at bay. "Even El heard him!"

Andy shouted back, "how can we trust that, Mike?! I get it - your girlfriend told you a secret so now it must be true! But leave Will and me out of it!"

Dustin wrapped an arm around Andy's shoulders, pulling her to him and placing his hand gently over her mouth. "Are you sure you're on the right channel?" He asked, trying to keep the peace.

"I don't think it's about that," Mike replied. Andy scoffed, shaking her head. Mike ignored her, "I think, somehow, she's channeling him."

"Like... like Professor X."

Mike nodded in agreement, "yeah."

Lucas and Andy shared a look. "Are you actually believing this crap?" Lucas asked, pulling Andy out from Dustin's hold as he faced Mike. Andy looked over at Dustin.

"I don't know... I mean..."

"No," Andy spoke up, "he doesn't, neither do we. You've gone crazy Michael and..." she paused and took a deep breath, "unless you have proof, I don't want to be involved with you, so prove it."

"But Andy," Dustin interjected, holding Andy down by leaning on her a bit, "do you remember when Will fell off of his bike and broke his finger?" He glanced over at the walkie-talkie briefly, "He sounded a lot like that."

Andy sighed. It was true that Will sounded like a baby when he cried

(or tried not to cry, thanks to his stupid fucking father), but Andy was definitely more of a pessimist than an optimist nowadays, and she didn't want to get her hopes up, as she'd already done before.

Lucas looked over, shocked to see Andy crumbling. "Didi you guys not see what I saw? They pulled Will's body out of the water! Andy had a freaking panic and punched a police officer!" Andy blinked in shock. She'd punched a police officer? When had that happened? "He's dead!" Lucas shouted, leaning over Andy to shout in Dustin's face.

"Well, maybe it's his ghost. Maybe he's haunting us?" Dustin suggested.

"It's not his ghost."

"So how do you know that?" Lucas leaned forward. Andy closed her eyes and placed her head in her hands, trying to block out the argument.

"All I know is Will is alive!" Someone pulled Andy's arms off of her head. It was Mike. "Will is alive!" he almost screamed in Andy's face, leaning in close as if trying to convince her more that way. Dustin quickly pushed him back when he saw the murderous glint in Andy's eyes. "He's out there somewhere. All we have to do is find him."

He sighed and glanced over at El who was still fiddling with the walkie-talkie. "This isn't going to work. We need to get El to a stronger radio."

Dustin glanced up with a smirk, "Mr Clarke's Heathkit ham shack."

Mike nodded, "yeah."

Andy stood up, pulling Dustin's arm off her in the process. Her shoulders felt almost bare at the lack of touch despite the heavy plaid shirt (that actually belonged to Christopher) and a shiver ran through her back. She quickly shook it off, "okay, I don't know what Mr Clarke's thingy-ham-whatever is, but I'm guessing it's in the school, which is automatically out."

Lucas nodded in agreement with Andy. "There is no way we're gonna

get the weirdo in there without anyone noticing. I mean..." he trailed off for a moment, "look at her." El glanced between them all, but kept her eyes mostly on Andy. Andy glared right back at her, feeling bad when the girl flinched. It wasn't her fault Mike believed her crazy after all...

"We can disguise her!" Mike said enthusiastically, "We still have some of Nancy's old stuff, I'm sure it'll fit her"

"No!" Andy shouted, drawing everyone's attention to her. "If," she paused for a moment to sigh, *I can't believe I'm letting myself get involved with this*, she thought to herself, *what would Tyler say?* "we must do this, then take her to my place," the boys stared at her in shock. Andy didn't blame them, she'd done a complete 180. "I have some stuff that could work."

It didn't take too long to get El to Andy's house. It was still empty, no lights on and not a single car or bicycle in the drive way. Andy lead her friends through the front way of her house, holding back a whimper and sob as they passed Christopher's room. The door was slightly ajar from when Andy had gone into it. Andy jogged past her room, the others taking little notice of her reaction to her brother's room.

She lead them up to her bedroom before dragging El into her large closet for the third time. El seemed quite relaxed in the large room, watching with wide eyes as Andy spun around the room, grabbing various items off of the racks and shelves before shoving them into El's arms. "We're going to make you so pretty people's jaws drop when they see you enter the room," Andy whispered softly as she leaned in close to El. A smile quickly grew on the bald girls face as the promise.

She tried on about five outfits before Andy was happy. It was an extremely daring outfit that Andy herself would never have the courage to wear, with pink silky pant, a white strip of fabric going across her chest and a colourfully beaded jacket slid over her shoulders (**yes, it is the outfit that Millie wore to coachella**). Andy had forced the girl into white sneakers and a brown wig, which she'd tired up into two small buns on either side of her head. Sliding a pair

of yellow tinted glasses onto her face, Andy smirked at her accomplishment.

The boys had taken one look at El before they faced Andy and stated simultaneously "no" and sent the confused El back into the closet for Andy to change her.

"What's wrong with it?" Andy demanded, crossing her arms over her chest.

"It's too..." Mike tried to find the words, "you."

Andy gasped, completely offend and spun on her heel with a flourish, stomping back into the closet. "They think you look to fabulous for school," Andy explained to El, who was glancing between her and the closet door in confusion and sadness.

"Not... pretty?" El asked softly, looking down at the outfit.

"Too pretty," Andy gently corrected, helping the girl take off her outfit. "It's okay though..." she faced El with a smile, "we can still make you pretty." El peered up at her through her lashes, a smile appearing on her face. Andy returned it, the two girls sharing a beautiful moment and memory that would last through their friendship for years to come.

In the end, El was dressed up in a plain, pink dress Andy hadn't worn for years with fade, dirty white converse and pink tinted sunglasses Andy had pulled out of who-knows-where. Andy herself had gotten changed into her brother's old clothes, happy to be connected to him in some way. She knew the high schoolers would immediately recognise the familiar black jacket and watch she'd snuck out of Christopher's room and knew they'd all immediately jump to conclusions.

The boys, being their clueless selves, hadn't really noticed the way the jacket and shirt hung off Andy's small frame, or how the shoes were just a tad too big for her (Andy had monster large feet and wasn't ashamed to admit it). All too soon, they were pulling out of the house on their bikes, El clinging tightly to Andy on the small seat

installed onto her bike, and on their way to school.

"Remember," Andy began as they started to lock up their bikes to the bike rack, "El is my cousin, Eleanor Curet, from Chicago. She came down to stay over Christmas break, but got here early because her parents are getting a divorce and wanted her out of it." The boys all nodded, slightly impressed with Andy's quick thinking. It was strange though, usually Andy couldn't lie even if it would save her life. Where had the confidence come from?

The five quickly entered the school, Andy holding El's hand tightly to keep up appearances. "Okay," Mike started, "remember, if anyone sees us, look sad."

The PA bell rung and Mr Hothman's voice washed over everyone "*Attention students, there will be an assembly to honour Will Byers in the gymnasium now.*" Andy froze, holding El in place. El gazed at the girl curiously as Dustin barged into the A.V. Club. "*Do not go to fourth period.*"

*** PANIC ATTACK

"It's locked," Mike told the others. Andy started breathing heavily, tears gathering in her eyes as El's curiosity turned into concern. She couldn't speak, or breathe, or see or hear. It was all a blurry mess and everyone was seeing her, everyone could see her weakness.

What was she doing?

Will was gone. What would all this do?

Nothing.

It'd do nothing.

Someone was touching her. Why?

Why should anyone get to see her weakness, her moment of fear and terror?

Why should these awful people get to honour Will Byers?

When they didn't even like him when he was alive?

Why was he dead?

Why *Will* of all people?

There was a voice. It was familiar.

Will?

No, Will was dead.

Jamie?

No, Jamie was at the assembly. For Will. Those people didn't deserve to honour him.

There was that voice again. Mr Clarke?

Yes, it was her science teacher. He was asking her something.

"Andessa? Can you hear me?"

He was touching her.

No.

Not Mr Clarke.

Not Will either.

Not Mike or Dustin or Lucas.

Who then?

El. It was El.

What had Mr Clarke asked? Could she hear him?

Yes, she could.

Could she say it?

No she couldn't.

Slowly, Andy nodded her head once. "That's good," Mr Clarke's voice said. "Can you speak?" Andy took a deep breath in, and out before slowly saying something. What'd she say? Andy couldn't tell you. She had no idea. Slowly, the room came back into focus. Mr Clarke stood in front of her, and she was wrapped up in El's arms. Mike, Will and Dustin weren't in sight, which was a relief. Andy wasn't sure if she could cope with the three excitable boys right then.

Her vision slowly went back to normal, her ears stopped ringing and she could breathe again.

***-END

"Are you okay?" Mr Clarke asked, voice soft. Andy nodded hesitantly and took a small step forward, leaving El's slightly-pathetic-but-still-adorable attempt at a hug. She kept the girls hand in her own, still, as the two girls followed behind Mr Clarke to the auditorium. El kept a close grip on Andy's hand and her eyes bled fear. Andy felt a twinge of guilt for causing the small girls fear.

"I don't believe I've met you before," Mr Clarke said to El. "What's your name?"

"This- uh" Andy stammered, "this-this is-"

"Eleanor," El cut in, giving Mr Clarke a small smile. "Andy's. Cousin." Andy's jaw dropped in amazement. El, although the words were stuttered and the sentences were broken up weirdly, had remembered Andy's little cover story and had actually spoken to Mr Clarke.

Her heart burst with love and adoration towards the quiet girl. Maybe she was wrong to be so mad and angry at Mike for believing in her, she certainly was quite charming.

"Where are you from, exactly?" Mr Clarke asked.

"Bad place-" El began, before Andy quickly stepped in.

"Chicago, where I'm from originally," Andy's voice was far quieter than normal and slightly choked from the tears still in her eyes and

sobs in her throat.

Mr Clarke nodded in understanding. "Ah." They were at the auditorium, and for once in her life, Andy didn't want to make a grand entrance. In fact, she didn't want to make an entrance at all. Mr Clarke took them in through the side doors, one that wasn't as creaky, but still every head turned towards them as they entered. Some of those with respect turned their head away when they saw Andy's tears and how she clutched onto El's, a stranger's, hand. The rest, unfortunately, didn't.

Jamie, dressed slightly dramatically in all black, darted off her seat and into Andy's arms, sobbing before she brought the two girls over to her seat beside some blonde girl Andy didn't know. She tuned out whatever crap the principal was talking about; everyone knows he didn't and doesn't give a rat's ass about Will. It was only Jamie's growl that drew her attention back to the assembly.

"What?" She whispered over to Jamie.

Jamie had her head turned to face Troy and James, who were sitting on the row or two below them. "They find this funny," she snarled. Andy's eyes narrowed as James asked a giggling Troy what was so funny.

"Who is interested in this? This is so stupid. Blah blah blah blah blah." Troy mocked. "*Oh he was such a great student. Oh, he's going to leave a hole in the community.*"

"Fucking idiot," Andy muttered.

She was surprised to hear El speak up from beside her. "Mouth breather." Andy turned to face her, a smile growing on her face.

Yes, she most definitely was wrong for distrusting her. Jamie giggled at El's comment. "I like you," she whispered over to her, a beautiful grin coming over El's face.

The assembly soon came to an end and Andy was filled with rage as she spied a chuckling Troy and James getting off their seats. "Hey!" She yelled at the same time as a familiar male's voice. Mike.

"Hey!" Miked yelled agin. "Hey, Troy!" The two boys stopped, slowly facing Mike. Jamie, Andy and El stood off to the side, Lucas and Dustin joining them. "You... you think this is funny?"

"What'd you say Wheeler?" Troy's voice hinted at a punch to the face.

"I-I saw you guys laughing over there. And I think that's a real messed up thing to do."

Troy tilted his head tauntingly. "Didn't you listen to the counselor, Wheeler? Grief shows itself in different ways. Besides, what's there to be sad about, anyway? Will's in fairyland now, right? Flying around with all the other little fairies. All happy and gay!" Then something absolutely shocking happened. It wasn't Mike or Andy or Dustin or Lucas who reacted.

It was Jamie.

The blonde girl stepped forward, black skirt swaying as she approached the two bullies she'd sat back and allowed to bully her friend for the past two years. "Troy, take it back," she stated, the crowd that'd gathered around gasped.

Jamie Kalum had never once interfered with the ways of the bullies, lest she be targeted herself. It wasn't hard to pressure Jamie into things, after all.

"What?" Troy asked in shock, eyes not leaving the shorter girl.

Jamie cleared her throat, the nerves in her eyes pushed away by her confidence. "Take. It. Back."

"Or what?" the bully retorted slightly nervously.

Jamie sent him a sweet smile before abruptly slamming her fist into his face. The crowd gasped and moved back in shock. Jamie Kalum, the most popular girl in school, had punched the living daylights out of Troy, the school bully. Andy looked over at El to see her staring at Troy with murder in her eyes... hopefully not literally.

"You're dead, Wheeler," Troy said as James gently grabbed Jamie and pulled her to the side. Andy rolled her eyes at the predictable nature

of the boys. Troy had moved back to his original target, not wanting to be seen hitting a girl, because 'girls are weak'. She would be more worried about Mike in a fight than Jamie. That girl was tough.

"Dead!" He screamed, running forward. He froze suddenly. Andy's eyebrows furrowed as a running water sound echoes through the room. Her eyes widened and a laugh tore through her lips as she looked down and saw a wet stain falling down Troy's pants. She looked over at El, a wide smile coming on her face as she saw the concentration on the other girls.

"Dude," one of Jamie's sort-of-not-really friends, Connor Deakly, shouted, "Troy peed himself." Laughter ran through the room as students pointed at the boy. James let go of Jamie, the blonde running back to her friends side.

"Hey, what's going on here?!" Came the principals yell and Andy quickly grabbed El's hand.

"Let's go," Andy whispered to El and gave Jamie a quick hug before sprinting off, ignoring Jamie's cry of "Wait, who is she?!" coming from behind her.

"Come on," Mike called after he opened the door, leading them in. El had abandoned her post by Andy's side, sticking to Mike like velcro.

"Now what?" Dustin asked as he, Lucas and Andy came to stand behind El, who was sitting in the small red chair.

"She'll find him," Mike said confidently.

Andy sighed. "It might not work, Mike, so-

"Shut up, Andy!" Mike shouted at her from over his shoulder. Andy sighed and laid heavily into Dustin's side. "Right, El?" The frequencies let off a high pitched squeal as they were turned on and El closed her eyes, starting to concentrate. The light soon flickered off, making them jump, Dustin's arms protectively laying over Andy's shoulders.

"Holy..." Lucas whimpered. A strange clanging began to come from the speakers. Andy slowly leaned down to hear better, the rest of the

boys following her lead.

"What is that?" Dustin asked worriedly. Not long afterward, a very, very familiar voice came out of the radio.

"Mom?"

Andy's face contorted in a silent scream and sob, tears finally released from her eyes.

It was Will. It had to be.

"No way," Lucan breathed.

"Mom... *please... Mom!*"

"Will?!" Mike shouted into the little microphone.

"Will it's us, are you there?!" Lucas continued. Andy couldn't say anything, her sobs finally vocalised as reality set in.

He was really alive.

"Can you hear us?" Dustin leaved over to say, clutching Andy close to him and tucking her head into his chest. "We're here!"

"Hello? Mom?"

"Turn it off," Andy whispered.

They ignored her, Lucas desperately asking "why can't he hear us?"

"I don't know!"

"Turn it off now!" Andy said strongly. Dustin must've heard her, because he turned down to face her, looking at her strangely.

"Mom... Mom, it's coming! It's like home, but it's so dark... It's so dark and empty. And it's cold! Mom? Mom!"

"TURN IT OFF!" Andy shrieked just as the radio sparked, going up in flames. The fire alarm began, El sitting back in exhaustion and Andy falling to the ground as she cried, Dustin having let her go to get the

fire extinguisher.

Mike turned El to face him, desperately asking her if she was okay, while Lucas ran to Andy, trying to get her to stand up. Dustin placed the fire extinguisher on the ground before lifting Andy up forcefully, grunting under her weight. Lucas and Mike grabbed onto El and the boys slowly lead the girl out into the now deserted hallways trying to get them into fresh air.

They placed El onto a rolling container, Dustin managing to get Andy onto her feet, and sped through the halls, rushing past the students, trying desperately to get their friends somewhere safe.

If they could save at least two of their friends, maybe the lost one wouldn't feel like such a failure.

AN: SO I PUT ANDY THROUGH HELL THIS CHAPTER, I REALLY JUST DESTROYED HER.

***clears throat* Hi! its only been... 4 months... not that long at all... so I tried to make this chapter extra long to make up for it... It didn't work... Please don't kill me?**

7. 6

It was dark, and scary. She was in the woods, a faint blue light coating her. How was there light in the woods? There was never any street lights here, nor was it day time. A quick clicking sound came from behind her and Andy screamed, jumping around. Nobody there...

Where was she? The Byers home? Yeah, that was it right? That... that path lead to the Byers home. But why was she there? She had no idea, no clue.

The clicking noise came from behind her a second time. She opened her mouth, ready to scream, when a cold, cold sensation covered her mouth, muffling her fear. It felt almost like... a hand. Someone, something, was telling her to be quiet.

Tears drenched her face and snot leaked out of her nose. Despite this, the hand didn't move. "Shh..." A soft, gentle voice said from behind her, and she was cocooned in warmth. That voice... it was familiar in a way, but distorted, as if hearing someone through a really fuzzy radio.

She was slowly guided to the forest floor, the warmth never leaving her side. Fuzziness came from all around her, as if radio frequencies were having a conversation. The sound lulled her, and she slowly closed her eyes, feeling safe and protected by the unknown force.

"What was Will saying?" Mike asked, sitting on the couch in his basement, El laying down across from him. "Like home... Like home..." Andy didn't move from where she was cradled in Dustin's arms. The boy had refused to let go of her, in fear that she'd collapse again. "But dark?" Mike repeated Will's words.

"And empty," Lucas reminded, sitting beside Dustin and Andy.

"Empty and cold," Dustin continued. Andy squeezed him tighter. "Wait, did he say cold?"

The three looked at Lucas for confirmation. "I don't know. The stupid radio kept going in and out."

Dustin sighed, throwing his head back in annoyance. "It's like riddles in the dark."

"Worse," Andy murmured in a horse voice.

"Like home," Mike ignored the two last comments, "like his house?"

Lucas pointed a finger up at him, exclaiming, "or like Hawkins!"

"Upside down," El spoke hesitantly. Hearing the girl speak, Andy slowly slipped out of Dustin's arms and crawled over to join the other girl. El opened her arms slowly, knowing the other girl was there to hug her. Andy did just that, embracing the child-like teenager.

"What'd she say?" Lucas asked.

"Upside down," Mike and Andy repeated softly.

Lucas scrunched his nose up, "what?"

"For goodness sake Lucas, she said upside down!" Andy shouted, her voice cracking like a teenage boys. El rested a gentle hand on Andy's head, her eyes telling her to stop yelling. Grumbling, Andy did as the stern girl commanded.

Mike rushed excitedly over to the D'n'D board, grabbing it. "When El showed us where Will was, she flipped the board over, remember?" Dustin and Lucas ran over to join him. "Upside down! Dark. Empty."

Lucas shook his head and glanced between Dustin and Andy. "Do you understand what he's talking about?"

"No," Dustin stated. Andy said nothing, laying still beside El.

"Guys," Mike drew their attention back to him, "come on, just think about it. When El took us to find Will, she took us to his house, right?" Andy shuddered as the memory came back to her, following El and Mike for hours, eventually going to *his* house, hearing those god-awful sirens and finding Will's not-real-body in the lake and the rest of the night vanishing in a blur.

"Yeah," Lucas stated shortly. "And he wasn't there."

"But what if he was there?" Andy's head snapped over to face them. "What if we just couldn't see him?" She slowly stood up.

"Like, he was hiding or something?" She asked, her voice still loud.

Mike glanced over at her, nodding with a smile. "What if he was on the other side?"

"The other side of what, though? The walls?" Andy raised her eyebrow, taking a seat at the small table.

Mike shook his head a bit. "Think bigger, Andy. More... abstract." He flipped the board over. "What if this is Hawkins and..." he flipped it to show the dark, blank underside again, "this is where Will is?" Andy sighed and rested her head on Dustin's shoulder. As much as she wanted to believe him, this whole thing was a bit far fetched. "The Upside Down."

"Like the Vale of Shadows," Dustin said, gently resting his head on Andy's. Dustin jumped up, grabbing the D'n'D book off the nightstand. "*The Vale of Shadows*," he read, "*is a dimension that is a dark reflection or echo of our world. It is a place of decay and death. A plane out of phase. A place of monsters. It is right next to you, and you don't even see it.*" Andy shivered, moving away from the book a bit.

She shook her head, the description sounded familiar... she didn't know how or why, but it did. Possibly from her D'n'D research leading up to the campaign that'd started all of this? No... but what?

Mike stared down at the image. "An alternate dimension," he breathed.

Lucas' voice was stuttering and nervous. "But.. ho-how do we get there?"

"You cast Shadow Walk," Dustin replied immediately.

Andy scoffed at the answer, shaking her head. "No, Dustin. How do we get to this... this... Land of Shadows-call it what you want, I am not calling it the fucking Upside Down-," she snapped at Mike as he opened his mouth, "in real life. Because none of us, apart from El hold magic powers."

"Maybe El can," Dustin ignored Andy's speech, or as much as he could with her glaring daggers at him.

They all, bar Andy and Dustin, who was glaring the pants off of one and apologising to the other respectively, turned to face El. "Do you know how we get down there?" Mike asked softly. "To the Upside Down?"

Andy turned to face him, teeth grinding. "I swear Michael, we are *not* calling it the Upside Down." El shook her head at Mike, ignoring Andy's comment.

"Oh my god," Lucas groaned, throwing his head back in annoyance.

Andy cleared her throat and stood up, walking over to El. She held a hand out to the exhausted girl, "come on, Ellie, let's go." El gently gripped the hand and pulled herself up while Andy grabbed her abandoned bag off of the floor. Mike stood up in alarm, speed walking over to the two girls.

"Wait! Where are you going?!" He demanded, looking over at the two of them.

Andy just stared at him, hand still clasped with El's. "We are going home. It's Will's funeral tomorrow, in case you forgot. I've got to get up early tomorrow to get myself and El dressed, as well as see what the fuck's happened to Tyler, then I have to wait for Jamie to come over so I can help her with her final resting gift and so she can help me go over my final resting gift, then I'm off to the library to do some more research on whatever this Land of Shadows-"

"*Vale* of Shadows!" Dustin cut in. Andy shot a glare his way, making the young boy grimace at the anger and hidden sadness in the brown eyes.

"Whatever this *Vale of Shadows*," she sent a final glare Dustin's way before facing Mike a second time, "is, then I'm doing some more searching for Christopher and Will, because in case you forgot, but not only is my best friend missing, but so is my brother." She stormed past the frozen figures that made up her best friends, gently tugging El behind her.

"And so my friends," she pulled open the basement door and walked out, before turning back in to face them, hand still resting on the door knob. "I bid you adieu." She slammed the door shut behind her and left the Wheeler home, still pulling El along behind her.

"Are you... okay?" El whispered, the words foreign and unused on her tongue.

Andy sniffled back tears and snot, a small, gentle smile on her lips at El's thoughtfulness. "Yeah... let's go home, Ellie."

Andy gasped, sitting up straight, muffled sobs already pouring out of her mouth as she awoke. Tears tracked down her face and splattered down on the earth below her. She was in the Byers home once again, rested on the couch. Floorboards were pulled up and torn from the floor, paint was peeling off of the walls. The beautiful throw pillow made by Will for Mother's Day a year ago was shredded, stuffing pulled off the couch and onto the floor.

"Andy..." someone-something murmured from behind her as strong, firm arms wrapped around her gently. "You've been fighting so hard for so long. Let yourself grieve, then come back strong. Find me, Andy, find us."

"We have faith in you, Andy," another voice whispered, the figure still unseen to her and the voice still faded. A loud creak and chattering came from behind the door. Andy stared in fear. The voices suddenly stopped talking, the warmth fading from Andy's side. The handle pulled down, and the door slowly began to creep open.

Andy awoke that day to someone violently shaking her, and a scream tearing through the air. "Andy! Andy! Andessa May!" A voice shouted. Andy closed her mouth, suddenly realising it was her screaming. Her throat was sore, and her eyes hurt from tears she hadn't realised she'd shed.

Sitting above her was Jamie. Beautiful Jayden Kalum. There to save the day. Jamie had a fearful look on her face, her eyes alight with worry.

"Oh thank goodness," she cried when Andy's eyes focused on her, "you weren't waking up. Your cousin here says you were screaming for awhile. The poor thing was so scared I had to tell her to leave the room!"

Jamie sat poised on the side of the bed, her eyes glazed with unshed tears and blonde hair ruffled. Gently, Andy was lifted up and pulled off of the bed, into one of her closest friends arms. "What the hell happened?" she asked, holding her brunette friend close.

Andy shook her head, struggling to regain her breath as she desperately gripped onto Jamie, hands shaking. "I was dreaming," she began, suddenly trailing off as she lost track of her thoughts.

"What the fuck about?!"

"I... I don't know..." Andy turned her head, pulling back to gaze at Jamie in the eyes. "I can't remember... but, I'm scared, Jamie." She sniffled, pulling back the snot and tears. "I was terrified, and confused."

Jamie bit her lip, very obviously searching for the words to say to her. "I don't know what to say," she settled on, truth reigning through her words and tone. "We should focus on Will. It's his funeral. Tonight," she sighed, "we will go to the library, and see if there's anything on dreams there."

How easy it would've been for Andy to burst into tears at that very moment. She was forever glad at her and Jamie's friendship, however secretive and strange it may seem to others. Her mama raised a strong girl, though, and Andy banished any thought of sadness from her head.

"Thanks," she whispered, holding her friends arm as they left the room together, grabbing onto a terrified El's with a soothing smile as they passed. It was time to get ready.

It was time for Will's funeral.

"Fear not," Pastor Charles read out to the crowd, "for I am with you."

Be not dismayed, for I am your God."

Andy stood beside Dustin and Mike, El sat in front of her. Her head was held high despite the small tears tracking down her face, and her hand tightly clasped Dustin's in her own. Her black dress swayed to a fro in the wind, her poncho protecting her from the cold. El's blonde, fake hair shook against her backless dress, the girl wearing Mike's coat to keep warm. Beside them was Mrs Byers, Jonathan and Tyler, the Fisher son rubbing soothing circles into Jonathan's shoulders as tears drifted down his face.

"I will strengthen you," the Pastor continued. "Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." El's eyes glimmered with curiosity as Andy's shone with depression. Why did it have to be Will? Sure they had a theory that he was alive, but it was just that; a theory.

"It's times like these that our faith is challenged. How, if He is truly benevolent could God take from us someone so young, so innocent?" Innocent, indeed. Will was quite sheltered, if a bit broken from his parents divorce. "It would be easy to turn away from God, but we must remember that nothing, not even tragedy, can separate us from His love. We are here today to find comfort-" Andy was snapped out of focus by Dustin's sharp elbow.

"What?" She hissed sharply and quietly. Dustin reached over and pointed to just across from them, where Jamie stood with her friend, Jennifer Hayes. Jennifer was crying gracefully, leaning into Jamie, who was putting on a brave face from them both.

"Just wait till we tell Will that Jennifer Hayes was crying at his funeral," Dustin whispered.

Andy held in a his, squinting her eyes at Jennifer in a glare as jealousy burned through her body. Who did Jennifer think she was? She'd never given a damn about Will before now, in fact, she'd always avoided the boy.

Who'd stood up for him when he was bullied? Andy.

Who'd held him when he cried about the rumours? Andy.

Who'd told those bullies to fuck off more times than she could count? Andy.

Who'd stood by and done nothing but watch and laugh? Jennifer. That girl had no place to be distraught.

Mrs Wheeler stepped forward, hushing Dustin gently and quickly. Andy tilted her chin in thanks to the woman, placing her head back on Dustin's shoulder, trying to ignore the world around them, if just for a moment. It worked, and the ceremony was soon over. People were standing up, coming forth and placing roses on top of Will's coffin.

Andy almost growled as she watched people simply chuck them is, as if giving a street performer a dollar as they were passing. As if it was a second thought; a common curtsy rather than a loving parting gift. She wasn't surprised though, all of these bitches never once seemed to care for Will; why would that change once he died?

She did watch, though, as Jamie stepped forward, setting down a beautiful painting of Will, smiling and happy as he never was in life.

"I want him to be happy in death," Jamie had told Andy as they'd set to painting the sketched lines, *"even if people couldn't accept his sexuality in life, in death I want his peace."* Andy had ignored the comment of Will's supposed sexuality, and had smiled at her friend and her big heart.

"Be in peace now," she faintly heard Jamie murmur under her breath as she carefully dropped it on top of the coffin. Andy stepped forward shortly after her friend, gently pushing a flower wreath and several photos of herself, the party and Will on top of the coffin. The flower wreath was made of flowers and sticks found at the old Byers hideout, the massive white flowers adorning the left side hand picked from Will's small, hidden garden he'd never dared to show anyone, except her.

"Be in peace," she whispered, "be safe." It was only hope keeping her belief that Will was still alive, but the young girl had decided to make her peace with his supposed passing at his funeral.

"Be in peace," El muttered from her position crouched beside her. Andy sent her a watery smile. She was trying.

They both were.

Andy sat at the round tables, head in her hands and El's soft hair tickling her shoulder. Dustin, Lucas and Mike had run off to get food, leaving the two girls at their seats. The mood was somber and relaxed, a melancholy feeling surrounding them.

Smooth hands pressed themselves into Andy's shoulders, Tyler's gentle, heartbroken voice reaching her ears. "Hey, Addie," he sniffled, "they found Christopher's car. It had some chick's clothes in it. The police think he's skipped town; might've gotten some girl pregnant. They think it was Barbara Holland, she went missing the same time."

"He wouldn't do that," Andy whispered after a moment of silence, moving her head from her hands to stare at her brother. His eyes were bloodshot, his normally spick and span hair slightly messy, as if he'd rushed it. His suit was old and slightly tacky, clearly rented cheap. Normally, Andy would be mad at the disrespect to Will's name, but Tyler... her family... they were in ruins.

Tyler chuckled. "I know," his voice cracked, "the cops don't believe me."

Andy reached up, grabbing her brother's hands and threading their fingers together. "Then they're fucking idiots... we'll find him, Ty. We'll find Christopher and bring him home." Faintly, she could feel El's eyes on her, sense the sadness within them, and for the first time since she found out her brother was missing, she wondered, would they bring Christopher home?

"I'd better go," Tyler said to her, after catching something in his eye, reluctantly letting his younger sister go.

"Will you be home tonight?" She asked, grabbing onto his hand, pleading with her eyes to say yes.

Tyler nodded, "yeah... I need some time with my sister." He the left

the table, not a moment too soon as the Party arrived again, seating themselves at the table with Mister Clarke.

"Andessa, hi," Mister Clarke spoke softly, as if scared of scaring a frightened deer away. He nodded over at El, "Eleanor, right?" El nodded, laying her head on Andy's shoulder once again.

"So, you know how in *Cosmos*, Carl Sagan talks about other dimensions?" Mike asked, plopping down beside El, Dustin beside Andy. "Like, beyond our world?"

Mister Clarke nodded, "yeah, sure. Theoretically."

"Right, theoretically." Mike hurriedly agreed.

"So, theoretically, how do we travel there?" Lucas questioned, ignoring Andy's eye roll.

"You guys have been thinking about Hugh Everett's *Many-Worlds Interpretation*, haven't you?" Mister Clarke raised his eyebrows, his face revealing that he believed he knew exactly what was going on. Andy's forehead creased; Hugh Something's What-now? "Well, basically, there are parallel universes. Just like our world, but just infinite variations of it. Which means there's a world out there where none of this tragic stuff ever happened."

"Yeah," Lucas shook his head, "that's not what we're talking about."

Dustin placed an arm around Andy's shoulders, gently moving El's head. "We were thinking of more of an evil dimension, like the Vale of Shadows. You know the Vale of Shadows?"

Mister Clarke nodded, "an echo of the Material Plane, where necrotic and shadow magic-" Andy, for once when it came to science, paid attention. These words were all new to her, she'd have to do some digging.

Mike interjected quickly, much to Andy's annoyance, "yeah, exactly. If that did exist, a place like the Vale of Shadows, how would we travel there?"

"Theoretically," Andy and Lucas chimed in simultaneously, sending

each other weird looks.

Mister Clarke shifted in thought, "well..." He reached forward, grabbing one of the paper plates and a simple black pen out of his coat pocket. Holding the plate up so the Party and El could see it, he described as he drew, "picture... an acrobat," he drew a stick figure and two lines on it, "standing on a tightrope. Now, that tightrope is our dimension. And our dimension has rules. You can move forwards, or backwards," he drew two arrows on the plate.

"But, what if, right next to our acrobat, there is a flea?" Andy tilted her head to the side as Mister Clarke drew a small flea. "Now the flea can also travel back and forth, just like the acrobat. Right?"

Andy absentmindedly nodded in agreement. "Right," the rest of the Party responded.

"Here's where things get really interesting. The flea can also travel this way," he drew some more, smaller arrows, "along the side of the rope. He can even go underneath the rope." Andy sat up straighter, everything suddenly clicking together in her head.

"Upside Down," El murmured as the other boys did. Andy turned her head to face the disguised girl, shock coating her features. What kind of sorcery was this?

"Exactly," Mister Clarke said simply, not noticing the revelations the others had had.

"But," Dustin began almost sadly, his arm tightening on Andy's shoulder, "we're not the flea, we're the acrobat."

"In this metaphor, yes, we're the acrobat."

Lucas slowly began to pry some more. "So we can't go upside down?"

Mister Clarke shook his head. "No."

"Is there any way for the acrobat to get to the Upside Down?" Dustin questioned hurriedly.

"We're still not calling it that," Andy murmured under her breath.

Dustin nudged her harshly, "it makes the most literary sense, shut up."

Mister Clarke missed the strange exchange occurring between the two. "Well, you'd have to create a massive amount of energy. More than humans are currently capable of creating, mind you, to open up some kind of tear in time and space, and then," he paused, folding the plate in half and punching a hole through it, "you create a doorway."

Dustin leaned forward in his excitement, "like a gate?"

"Sure, like a gate. But, again, this is all-"

"Theoretical," Lucas and Andy stated at the same time once more, sending each other more strange looks.

"But... but what if this gate already existed?" Mike tentatively inquired, voice nervous and hands shaking.

Mister Clarke squinted his eyes. "Well, if it did, I-I think we'd know. It would disrupt gravity, the magnetic field, our environment. Heck, it might even swallow us up whole."

Andy bit her lip, placing a hand on El's.

They'd found the gate.

"Science is neat," Mister Clarke continued. Andy shrugged Dustin's arm off of her, sitting up taller as she felt El lean into her, the cool glaring eyes of Lucas sent her way. "But I'm afraid it's not very forgiving." Andy tightened her hand over El's.

Eleven was their gate, and Andy would be damned if she ever let her go.

They'd gone back to Andy's house after the funeral, sitting tight in the living room. Mike had reexplained everything to El, using the same picture and everything. Andy had only rolled her eyes. El had been there. She knew.

"It would take a lot of energy to build a gate like this," Mike told El,

his brown eyes jealously marking over where El was sat in Andy's lap, the brunette having taken a seat beside Dustin, at least before the brunet boy had gotten up and started walking in circles. "But that's gotta be what's happened! Otherwise, how'd Will get there, right?"

El hesitantly nodded, fear lilting through her voice, "right."

Lucas glared at her, suspicion coating his usually mellow gaze. "What we want to know is, do you know where the gate is?" El shook her head, hunching over herself and closer to Andy. "Then how do you know about the Upside Down?!" Lucas exploded.

"Alright," Andy spoke for what felt like the first time that day, coaxing El off of her lap and standing up. "First, we are *not* calling it the Upside Down! That's a stupid name a preschooler would come up with. Second, Mike lay off of her, Lucas, you too. I don't get it either," she was quick to say when she saw the boys open their mouths, "but turning on each other is not the way to go about saving Will!"

"Hypocritical much?" Lucas muttered. Mike's eyes widened and Dustin froze in place. This was not good.

Andy took a step forward, eyes challenging. "You want to say that again?" She spoke warningly.

Lucas' eyes narrowed. "I *said*," he emphasised, "hypocritical much? When Will disappeared, who was it that ran off after denouncing us as friends, huh? It wasn't me, or Mike, or Dustin, or even El! It was *you*, Andy!" He stood up, his short height still towering over Andy's. "I'm saying you don't have the right to treat us like shit, or fuck us up." He began to walk closer, words sharper than a knife and piercing Andy's heart and skin. "El is not innocent in *this*, Andessa, and you know it! And if you run away again, you're just proving I'm right."

Andy stared into Lucas' eyes, brown on brown. He was right. She was hypocritical, and El was not as innocent as Andy wanted to believe. Lucas was right, and she was wrong. And that hurt, probably more than it should. Because her whole life, Andy had been raised to believe that she was right. That it was right to stand up for bullied kinds and it was right to be smug about her intelligence. She'd always thought she was a good judge of character, and that everyone around

her couldn't for their assess to save their lives.

She'd thought she was leading them, not causing them harm. How it fucking hurt to face the truth. She was pulling this Party apart, had been since Will disappeared. For the first time in her life, Andy faced the facts. Lucas was right.

And she was wrong.

AN: Soooooo finally got another chapter up! Yes, I left it randomly, but I guess I wanted to give you guys a chance to sit with what just happened. It was a heavy fight they got into, and I'd like to believe that there's going to be some notable character development from Andy from this point forth. Let me know what you think as always!

8.7

She'd thought she was leading them, not causing them harm. How it fucking hurt to face the truth. She was pulling this Party apart, had been since Will disappeared. For the first time in her life, Andy faced the facts. Lucas was right.

And she was wrong.

"Dustin, what were you doing?" Mike called, trying to redirect the attention onto the curly haired boy. "Dustin?" Dustin snapped out of his trance, staring at Lucas and Andy in horror and amazement.

"I-I need to see your compasses," he cried, finally pulling Lucas' attention off of Andy. Andy didn't move though, brown eyes still blown wide.

"What?" Mike asked incredulously.

"You compasses," Dustin yelled. "All of your compasses, right now! Andy!" Andy finally faced Dustin, face pale and eyes full of unshed tears. "Please go get your compasses."

Andy nodded before running out of the room and into her father's study. She paused just outside the room, inhaling softly as Lucas' words echoed in her mind. 'You're a hypocrite!' he repeated on a loop. Stuttering breaths came out of her mouth as she made her way into the room, bypassing all the paperwork on the desk and reaching into the second drawer. A compass almost flew into her hand as it was flung about in the drawer.

Looking around carefully, she examined the room. A stunning image of her parents rested above the fireplace, the walls surrounding it lined with books. A quick glance down at the desk revealed paperwork that was half filled out, a pen leaking onto the table, covering the paperwork in its black ink.

Quickly reaching down, Andy picked up the pen, clicking it shut and throwing it in the bin. She reached into the drawer, where she knew her father kept the scrap paper, and yanked out several sheets, laying

it over the spilled ink. "Dammit!" She cried softly as the ink spread through the paper like a wildfire. She chuckled the sheets in the bin, before examining the page carefully.

Her eyes widened as she read the contents of the page and she shoved it into her bag. She knew she couldn't allow anyone to see that paper. Nobody could see it, not until she'd figured out what it meant.

"Andy!" Dustin called from the hallway. Andy ignored him, scanning over the other pieces of paper to see if they held as much meaning as the one in her bag.

"Andy!" He called again.

Andy shot up from her place at the desk when she heard footsteps coming towards the study, screaming "Coming!" as she dashed into the hall, and straight into Dustin.

"Did you get it?" Dustin asked gazing at her empty hands. Andy blinked for a second before she remembered the importance of finding the compasses.

"Oh," Andy jumped, "yeah, here." She passed the compass to Dustin, hoping to get him out of the hallway.

Dustin didn't move, staring at the singular compass. "Is that it?" Andy nodded, although she herself wasn't very certain. Her father's office was a mystery to her, just as much as it was to Dustin, really. "Oh... okay," disappointedly, Dustin pocketed the compass. He faced Andy again, smile blooming on his face. "Ready?!" Andy gave a shaky nod in reply. "Let's go!"

"Um, actually," Andy called shyly to Dustin's back. The curly haired boy slowly turned to face her, eyebrows raised.

"Dessa, what is it? We have to go!" He gestured hurriedly out the door.

Andy opened her mouth, before pausing. "I-I I have to stay here. I have some other stuff to do."

Dustin's expression turned almost offended. "What do you mean?! We're doing research 'Dessa! We need you to stop the dumbos from fighting!"

"Well I'm not very good at that, am I?" Andy snapped, eyes narrowing at her friend. Dustin paused, brown eyes looking Andy up and down. "I'm going to stay here and do some research. You go on this - this crusade with the boys." She spun on her heel, opening the door to the office.

"You-you do that," Dustin muttered weakly behind her, his voice soft. Andy paused, a nanosecond feeling like hours, as she considered turning back around. She considered turning in place and running after those three stupidly smart, yet so brainless boys that she adored with everything in her.

An image flashed through her mind, an image of big brown eyes and combed brown hair, a short mullet in his early teens that she'd gladly snipped off. An image of giggling at three am and sneaking drinks. Christopher. Her brother. Her big, brave brother who was missing. Who the police claimed had ran off. Who everyone else had forgotten.

Brown eyes narrowed and Andy stormed forward into her dad's office, leaving her friend's behind. And wasn't that a metaphor for her life?

"I don't understand," Jamie muttered as she poured over the Dungeons & Dragons book Andy'd given her. "Why exactly am I looking at this? I," her tone turned accusing, "thought we was gonna be looking at dreams and stuff."

"Were," came Andy's reply, a gentle correction.

"So? Who cares? You've apparently decided to change your major from 'common sense' to 'delusional nerd'." Andy's eyes narrowed at Jamie, the blonde holding a cheeky smile on her face.

Andy sighed, turning her gaze back to the greek mythology book she held in her hands. "I know, I know. It sounds delusional. But the boys

somehow think their D&D game was involved with Will's kidnappi-death."

Jamie quietened, several moments of silence passing between the two friends.

"You mean Christopher's too, don't you?"

Andy froze. Her eyes tingled as she fought back the tears, blinking them away. "I don't know where he is, Jamie," she said, voice breaking and wobbling. "He's out there somewhere, and I know nothing." Andy looked up, straight into her friends green eyes that sung with sympathy, with pity. Andy barely held in a grimace. How she hated pity. "This is the only lead I have. Just," she sniffled, "humour me, okay?"

Jamie nodded slowly, turning back to her book. "What are we looking for?" She asked.

"Anything to do with the Demogorgon, or alternate realms." Andy flipped over her page, jotting down in her journal. She could practically feel Jamie's eyebrows rise.

"Al-alternate realms?" She said, her voice reeking with skepticism.

Andy hummed. "Mr Clarke told us that theres a way to potentially cross into an alternate world, as long as you have a strong enough power source."

"And do you have a power source?"

"Yep, but she went with the rest of the Party."

"She?!"

"Oi!" the screeching of one of the librarians came from behind them. Jamie and Andy whirled around, watching fire leave her nostrils. "If you girls can't learn to control your voices, get out of my library," she warned, before swanning off with a huff.

"Jesus, no wonder she's divorced," Jamie murmured under her breath.

Andy chuckled in agreement. "No kidding." The two went silent, an awkward tension filling the space as they kept to their books.

Andy's book was an old, faded textbook that'd been long abandoned if the dust patterns had anything to say about it. The Greek mythology course at school had come to an abrupt stop over a decade ago, according to the librarian, and the book hadn't been checked out since. The yellowed pages and plain font span around in Andy's brain, reading;

THE UNDERWORLD

The Underworld, or the Land of Death, is the realm in which people go to after they die. The realm is split into four parts; Elysium, the Asphodel Meadows, the Fields of Punishment and Tartarus. Elysium was the place of wealth and luxury, covered in shining gold and housing only the best of the best. The Asphodel Meadows was a place of indifference - only the cowardly went there in a desperate attempt to avoid judgement. Their souls wonder the fields for eternity, never happy, but never suffering. The Fields of Punishment is the plane in which all souls were tortured for their crimes. This is the place the cowardly avoid. Tartarus is a plane worse than any punishment the judges could reign. Considered as an almost entirely separate realm, Tartarus is where the Gods sentenced and imprisoned the Titans. No human soul could last in Tartarus.

Andy slowly shut the book, her fingers trembling and her eyes wide. She'd seen that name before. *Tartarus*. She knew it from somewhere. *Tartarus*. Slowly, a shaky hand slid off the book and to her satchel. *Tartarus*. She dug through the satchel with the thirst of a dying dehydrated man searching for water in the desert. *Tartarus*. She hissed as a sharp pain grew along her palm. She pulled her hand out, a red line of blood across her palm. *Tartarus*. It was a paper cut. There was paper in there. *Tartarus*. Just what she was looking for. She pulled the paper out, the thick, damp ink stain coating the page dripping onto her nails. *Tartarus*.

Her brown eyes flashed as she barely made out the words written on the page.

PROJECT: TARTARUS

Andy screamed as she dodged the long, slimy arm. It just missed, slamming into the wall above her head. The glass tiles fell off the wall and came down on her like an avalanche, pounding into her head with no restraint. She groaned, the bitter taste of iron telling her of the blood in her mouth.

"Come on, just a bit longer," the familiar voice that accompanied her during her dreams said, a warm tingling pulling on her arm.

Andy's teeth chattered as she forced herself to her feet. "Where are we going?" She whimpered, leaning against the warm figure as they did a strange stumble-sprint.

"To the woods. I think I know a place we can hide." The voice replied, panting. "Plus, we need to fix that cut on your head. Urgently."

Andy shook her head slowly, vision blurring more than it already was. "I can live. It's just a small cut."

"You misunderstand." The voice, usually so warm and understanding, had changed to a voice of distress. They talked fast, wobbling and stuttering. "That-that creature could track us through you. Andy... that thing hunts by blood."

Andy shot up in her bed, breathing heavily. Her head pounded and her mouth tasted metallic. She glanced around in confusion. When had she gone to bed? She stumbled out of her bed, her day clothes still on. How had she gotten home? The last thing she remembered was being in the library, with Jamie.

She gazed out her window, staring into the slowly fading sun. It was just now sunset. How had that happened? She and Jamie couldn't have been at the library any later than five. Jamie's mum was extremely strict, after all.

In a confused haze, Andy left her bedroom, stumbling her way down the stairs and to the second floor. She brushed past her parents room, almost scared to enter it (she was never allowed entry as a child. Not even after nightmares. It was her parents only restriction.) and wandered to a polished wooden door, dust covering the handle.

She wasn't surprised. This room was hardly cleaned. Patricia, the maid, had had some sort of row with the room's owner before they'd left. Andy herself rarely came to this room. She never saw a reason too. Tara had cut all ties with her and with the family barely even a week after leaving them behind for her fucking boyfriend. It'd been three fucking years since Andy had even last heard Tara's name, let alone see her.

But now, when her parents were no where to be found, and Christopher was missing, and Tyler was still at the Byers, Andy wanted nothing more than to talk to *someone*, even if it was her absent sister. To feel the comfort of her sister's silk pillows and the soft fur comforter. They'd been close once, way back then, before boyfriends became a thing and drinking and drugs and whatever else tore their family apart.

Christopher had been doing it to; before he disappeared. The drinking and sleeping around that is. He was following in Tara's footsteps, which was probably why the police didn't believe what Tyler said. One Fisher had run off, it wouldn't have been that shocking for another, right?

Someone might've blamed their parents, but Andy couldn't see how. Their parents loved them with every fiber of their being, something so clear to Andy, but almost impossible to Tara. It was what'd broken them apart, in the end. Tara tried to run away with Andy, take her to New Yourk and get the fuck away from their family and whatever legacy Tara had left behind. Andy had screamed, alerting their parents and the neighbours to what was happening. Tara never forgave Andy. Andy never blamed her.

She slowly opened the door, relishing in the familiar creak that reminded her of late nights spent giggling and laughing at girls in movies.

The dust was far more evident in the room. It coated the curtains and spread across the bed. It'd be uncomfortable and even almost unhygienic for Andy to go near it, but she still did. Gently, she laid herself onto her sister's bed, breathing in the dust and trying desperately not to cough at the influx of duct balls and dust mites that travelled into her nose. She rolled over, staring into the black

and white eyes of the photograph of Tara's high school boyfriend. Andy was pretty sure that that was the one that'd gotten her pregnant. Tara hadn't taken anything but her clothes when she'd left. She hadn't wanted anything to tie her back to her *'old family'*.

Minutes trickled by slowly. Roughly an hour had passed before Andy sighed and stood up from the bed. She had better things to do than lay back and reminisce. She had a long list of things she had to do, first off being find out what'd happened to El and the Party. Then, she was going to find her brother. That she swore.

She made her way through the large house, past the photo covered hallway and the carpeted red stairs, down to the first floor. A familiar sound filled her ears. Hitched, panting breaths and wet, heart breaking sobs. She peered carefully around the corner, not at all surprised by what she saw. Tyler was crouched over Christopher's bed, nose buried in his twin's pillow as he wailed to all who could hear.

"Come back!" he screamed into the pillow, his words surrounded by voice cracks and whimpering. Andy winced. Nothing hurt more than seeing your older sibling, someone you looked up to, break down. "Please Chrissy, please."

Andy slipped into the room and fell beside her brother, wrapping her arms around him. "Come on, Ty," she murmured around her own whimpers, trying to tug her brother away from his pillow. "Please, come on." Tyler didn't move. Well he did, but only to shove Andy away from him. "Tyler, please," she begged, small voice cracking. "You need to shower and eat. Come on." It only took one whiff of him for Andy to realise that Tyler hadn't showered in the time he'd been away.

He still didn't move, so neither did she. The two sat there well into the night, the elder crying and screaming for his brother to return, and the younger begging for her only family member to come back to her. Tyler fell asleep at 2:58 that morning. He still hadn't moved.

Andy pushed herself up off the floor and pressed a kiss to her brothers cheek. Her own cheeks were wet and stained, brown eyes puffed and swollen. She couldn't think properly. She'd watched her

brother lose his voice as he yelled to all the gods he knew to return his other half to him. Begged them to take him instead. Called himself an abomination.

WARNING: MENTIONS OF BODY DYSPHORIA AND PERIOD TYPICAL TRANSPHOBIA. PLEASE SKIP UNTIL THE END OF THE MARKED AREA IF THIS CAUSES ISSUES FOR YOU

He wanted to be a girl, he confessed at around 1 o'clock. He wanted boobs and a vagina. He hated his body, hated that he was a boy. He deserved to be taken away, because he was flawed beyond repair. And although she hated it, and hated herself for it, Andy couldn't help but agree.

To think that way, it went against everything she agreed with. It went against loving yourself, it went against trusting your parents, it went against the tinniest part of her that remembered her Christian schooling. It just wasn't right.

Andy sat in the kitchen, holding her head in her hands. She didn't know what to do, what to think. Somehow, she wasn't quite sure how, she found herself outside, seated on her bike. She exhaled deeply and rode off, heading towards the first house she could think of.

The Henderson house leered above her, all the lights off and not a soul in sight. Andy took no notice of this, using her bike as a ladder of sorts and pulling herself onto the roof. The Henderson house wasn't a large house by any means, but it wasn't the first time Andy had snuck in to Dustin's room, and Andy knew that it was near impossible to enter Dustin's room except by climbing the roof and crawling in through the window.

She carefully army crawled across the roof, making sure every movement was as slow as a snails. It wouldn't do to wake anyone but the person she'd been intending to. She slowly began to hang her upper body from the roof, lowering herself until she was nose to nose with the glass window. Dustin was an idiot who always left his

window unlocked - as Andy had come to know, so she merely reached out an arm and slid the window open.

Safely pulling herself back onto the roof, Andy turned herself around until her feet were dangling over the edge. She carefully slid herself backwards, her feet, then her knees, then her butt over the edge of the roof. She continued lowering until the tops of her ribs were the last object on the roof, and started to swing herself back and forth.

Finally getting enough momentum, Andy flung herself off of the roof, landing perfectly inside Dustin's bedroom. Andy grinned to herself at her small victory and faced the bed, only to cover a small scream as surprise at the sight of Dustin sitting up in his bed, a confused look on his face.

"Andy, what are you doing here?" He asked, pausing a bit to yawn. His voice was deep and husky, as one's voice normally went after periods of sleep.

Andy blushed. She hadn't exactly expected him to be awake. She herself had no clue what she was doing there.

"I need some advice," she found herself saying nervously. "Something big just happened."

That morning found Andy leaving Dustin's home with a clear mind. They'd stayed up all night discussing moral values and family before Dustin and Andy had managed to draw a conclusion. Andy didn't care, and she wouldn't care again. Tyler was her family, her sibling, and if he was a girl - better for her. Someone to replace the shitty sister Tara had been these past few years.

She rode home full of determination, a massive smile on her face. That was exactly what she'd be telling Tyler when she got home. She didn't care anymore, she just loved her family and wanted them all back with her. She loved Tyler no matter what.

But when she got home, there was not a Tyler to be found. She checked in Christopher's room, where she'd left him, she checked his room, his and Christopher's bathroom, the lounge room, her father's

study, Tara's room, Tyler's study, Christopher's study, their parents room on the off chance, the garage, and finally, the kitchen.

The kitchen's marble tops glimmered gently, a now cold stack of pancakes resting in the centre. There was a simple note, reading '*I went back to the Byers*', but that was it. Tyler had left, again.

Andy forced herself to eat the cold pancakes. Tyler had made them for her despite everything, after all. She ate until the plate was glistening and then ate some more. Her Walkie-Talkie, that was rested on the counter, gave a buzz.

"Dessa," came Dustin's call, "meet me at Mike's. He's panicking. El still hasn't come back. Over."

Andy sighed, reaching across the table to grab the Walkie-Talkie. "Dustin, I'll be over in a second." She forced herself to her feet and dragged herself up the stairs to her bathroom, keeping the Walkie-Talkie close to her chest.

Fifteen minutes later, a dressed and refreshed Andy left her house, big round sunglasses covering the bags under her eyes. Tugging her hair hurriedly into a bun, Andy pushed the pedals on her bike, starting her journey back to the Henderson house. Her legs burned and her eyes squinted, all familiar feeling to the brunette girl, but something about it felt different. Off.

It could've been the complete lack of sleep she'd gotten the night prior, or it could've been the downfall from her goal not being completed, but something about Andy felt weird that day, and not in a good way. Her vision swayed slightly and her hands shook from their position on the handle bars.

"Andessa!" Claudia, Dustin's mum, greeted cheerfully from her car as Andy pulled into her house.

"Hello Mrs Henderson," Andy smiled, taking the time to close her eyes behind her sunglasses.

"What brings you here, darling? I'm about to head out, so you and Dusty probably shouldn't stay in the house alone." She leaned out of

the car, whisper talking conspiratorially, "we wouldn't want the neighbours talking." Andy held in a giggle as Claudia winked exaggeratedly.

She absolutely adored Mrs Henderson. Claudia was a highlight of Andy's day every time she saw her. "Don't worry, Mrs Henderson. Dusty and I will be out and about."

Claudia grinned and closed the car door, swiftly pulling out of the drive and hurrying down the street with a simple, 'tata!' Andy dumped her bike on the floor and bounded up the stairs and entered the Henderson home - as mentioned, the Henderson's weren't particularly suspicious people, and always left everything unlocked. "Oh Dusty!" She called into the house.

She began to walk into the house, jokingly calling for 'Dusty' every few seconds. She knew how much Dustin hated that nickname. She'd just made her way past the living room when two large, warm hands made their way around her exposed midriff, clutching her tightly. Andy shrieked slightly, before falling into peals of laughter when she was lifted from the ground.

"Dont! Call! Me! Dusty!" Dustin shouted as he chucked Andy up and down, smiling a toothless grin as the laughter carried through the small home.

He quickly put the girl down, and the two shared a large grin. "Mike's?" Andy asked, correcting her sunglasses from where they'd slid off of her nose.

"Mike's."

"I just... I can't believe she didn't come back." Mike sighed as he paced his basement.

"She's gotta be close," Dustin said from his seat beside Andy on the couch. Andy stayed quiet. She'd only just been told of the situation as she and Dustin were riding over.

"She said it wasn't safe. She just messed up the compasses because

she wanted to protect us. She didn't betray us." Mike ranted. "If anything, Andy betrayed us, because she couldn't be bothered coming along."

Andy looked down at the floor, barely swallowing back her protest. Mike was right, after all. She had been selfish, but she didn't regret ditching the guys in favour of finding her answers. The pieces of the puzzle were slowly being found. She just couldn't piece them together.

"Mike, calm down," Dustin warned darkly, wrapping an arm around Andy's shoulders.

"I shouldn't have yelled at her. I never should've done that."

Andy sighed.

"Mike this isn't your fault," Dustin tried for soothing.

Mike nodded, "yeah, it's Lucas'."

"It wasn't his fault either."

"It wasn't his fault?"

"No."

"So you're saying he wasn't way out of line?"

"Totally, but so were you!"

"What?"

"And so was Eleven."

"What the hell, Dustin?!"

"And so was Andy," Dustin finished.

Andy glanced up at Dustin, but still didn't speak. She knew what she needed to say, but she also knew she had to wait her turn. Sure, she'd been cruel first, but Mike and Lucas had had a full on fist fight. That had to be resolved first, and then she'd apologise. Was it pride? A bit.

"Oh, give me a break!"

"No, Mike, you give me a break! All four of you were being a bunch of little assholes! I was the only reasonable one." Andy returned her stare to her shoes. Dustin was right, of course. "But the bottom line is, you pushed first. And you know the rule, you draw first blood-"

"No! No way! I'm not shaking his hand."

"You're shaking his hand!"

"No, I'm not!"

Ding dong.

Mike stood in front of Lucas' door, barely holding back a suffering sigh as he prepared to apologise. Andy stood beside Dustin on his right. She still hadn't spoken. Andy jumped as the door opened, revealing Lucas in all his angry glory.

"What do you want?" He demanded, hands on his hips. Mike said nothing, merely looking around. Andy still did not speak. Dustin huffed and slapped the two over the head. Mike sent him an angry look, only to get a glare in return. Andy grimaced as she rubbed the back of her head. It hadn't hurt, but the disappointment behind the action said plenty.

"I drew first blood so..." Mike trailed off, holding out his hand. Lucas stared at his hand in disbelief, before ignoring it.

He faced Andy. "What do you want?"

Andy took a deep breath, pushing down all her pride. "To apologise. You were right. I was wrong. I was cruel, mean, argumentative, bossy, rude -"

Lucas cut her off, "yes, you were." He sent her a final evaluative look before stepping aside. "All of you get your butts in."

He lead them into the parlour, where they all stood in silence. Lucas began to pace in front of them, clearly thinking everything over.

"Okay, I'll shake." He finally said. Dustin grinned and Mike hurriedly stuck out his hand. "On one condition," they all froze. "We forget the weirdo and go straight to the gate."

"Then the deal's off," Mike spat.

"Fine," Lucas yelled in return.

"Fine!" Mike mocked.

Dustin shook his head in worry. Andy stood to the side, going over every thought carefully. "No, no not fine! Guys, seriously?" Dustin was done dealing with the children. He spun Mike to face him.

"Do you even remember what happened on the Bloodstone Pass?" Mike and Lucas shared a confused glance. Andy sighed and shook her head, knowing she would have no clue. "We couldn't agree on what path to take, so we split up the party and those trolls took us out one by one. And it all went to shit. And we were all disabled!" Mike and Lucas remained silent. "So we stick together, no matter what!"

Lucas nodded, "yeah, I agree. But this is the party, right here in this room."

"El is one of us now," Mike reaffirmed. Andy bit her lip. This would not go well.

"Um, no, she's no. Not even close! Never will be. She's a liar, a traitor-"

"She was just trying to keep us safe! She didn't mean to hurt you. It was an accident!"

"An accident?"

"I agree," Andy whispered. Everyone went silent. She looked up to see all three boys looking at her with shock. "With the conditions, that is," she explained hurriedly. Mike's expression turned to anger, and Dustin's to pure shock. "I've grown to love El like a little sister. But Will was a brother way before that. I need to stand by my family. I'll help you find the gate, and find Will, and," her voice choked a bit, "find Christopher." Mike's eyes softened at the reminder of her

missing brother. Andy barely held in a scoff. Of course he forgot.

Andy held her hand out. "Deal?" Lucas grinned and joined hands with her, shaking twice.

"Deal."

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I'M BACK! I know, I know, I'm actually not dead, shocker!